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# **THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH IN ROMANS 4**

BY NILS RITTER

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF M.THEOL.

JOINT DEGREE UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM & UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN

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## **THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH IN ROMANS 4**

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To  
Hannelore Ritter, my dear wife.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Character of Abraham's Faith in Romans 4**

by Nils Ritter, submitted 1999 for the M.Theol.

Paul's concept of justification by faith has been a matter of discussion for many years. In order to avoid a too general treatment of the subject, this thesis focuses on Paul's concept in Romans 1-4 and especially on the crucial example of Abraham in Romans 4. With Abraham it is discussed what bearing his example has on the overall concept of justification by faith, its soteriological exclusiveness, and its relationship to Christology.

The introduction reflects on the main views proposed by scholars concerning Paul's concept of justification by faith and particularly on their views of Romans 1-4. Having drawn a picture of the broad field of opinions, Romans 1-4 is put in Chapter 2 in its historical and literary context.

These general considerations provide the basis for the discussion in Chapter 3 of the various views concerning the relation of justification by faith and the law before and after the Christ event, its relation to Christology and the important question why Paul possibly expresses the concept in theocentric rather than Christocentric terms. The discussion focuses first on Paul's general thought and moves then on to discuss if and how Abraham reflects Paul's argument about faith. In discussing Abraham's role in Paul's argument a special attention is, furthermore, given to his paradigmatic function.

Coming to the conclusion, the findings are summarised and the obstacles for an application of these findings are being discussed, such as the question of the centrality of Paul's concept of justification by faith and if Romans 1-4 represents an occasional position. This final discussion provides the means for a brief suggestion of possible areas of application.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
THE TRADITIONAL VIEWS.....	1
<i>The clear Break between the Aeons.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The salvation historical Continuity.....</i>	<i>5</i>
THE TWO-COVENANT HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH.....	8
E. P. SANDERS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION.....	15
<b>CHAPTER 2 THE HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL CONTEXT OF ROMANS 1-4 ....</b>	<b>21</b>
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	21
THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF ROMANS 1-4 .....	26
<i>General Observations.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>The Specific Context.....</i>	<i>28</i>
The traditional View & Sanders' Adherents .....	28
The two-covenant hermeneutical Approach.....	31
<b>CHAPTER 3 THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH IN ROMANS 4.....</b>	<b>34</b>
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT ABOUT FAITH.....	34
<i>The Law .....</i>	<i>34</i>
The Law and Faith before the Christ Event.....	35
Salvation historical Continuity.....	35
The Jews and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event .....	36
The Jews, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith.....	38
The Purpose of the Law .....	44
The Gentiles and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event.....	48
The Gentiles, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith.....	52
The Law and Faith after the Christ Event.....	58
<i>Christology .....</i>	<i>64</i>
The Efficacy of the Christ Event .....	64
Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.....	72
<i>Faith in God .....</i>	<i>83</i>
Romans 4 and Galatians 3 .....	84
Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language .....	86
ABRAHAM AS THE REFLECTION OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT ABOUT FAITH .....	93
<i>Preliminaries .....</i>	<i>93</i>
The Purpose of Paul's use of Abraham .....	93
A Classification of Abraham .....	97
<i>Faith, the Law and its Works.....</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Christology .....</i>	<i>103</i>

<i>'Faith in God'-Language</i> .....	105
PAUL'S USE OF ABRAHAM – A MODEL? .....	106
<i>Abraham, the Type of the old Aeon</i> .....	106
<i>Abraham used exclusively for the Inclusion of Gentiles</i> .....	109
<i>Abraham as a Model</i> .....	112
Hays' Suggestion.....	113
Paradigmatic Language and Paul's use of Abraham .....	114
The Scope of καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς in Rom.4:24a.....	116
Paul's Application of Abraham's example.....	119
<b>CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>122</b>
SUMMARY OF PAUL'S ARGUMENTATION OF ROMANS 1-4 .....	122
<i>Preliminary Considerations</i> .....	122
<i>Paul's Argument in Romans 1-4</i> .....	123
General Observations .....	123
Paul's Argumentation with Abraham .....	124
OBSTACLES FOR AN APPLICATION .....	125
<i>The Centrality of Paul's Concept of Justification by Faith</i> .....	126
A general Categorisation of the different Views .....	126
'Christology' as Paul's suggested Centre of Thought .....	127
'Justification' as Paul's suggested Centre of Thought.....	130
Other suggested Solutions .....	133
Additional Remarks.....	135
<i>Romans 1-4, an occasional Position?</i> .....	136
SUGGESTED AREAS OF APPLICATION .....	139
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>141</b>

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many attempts have been undertaken to reflect on Paul's concept of justification by faith. Various views have been argued for and no consensus has been reached on questions such as that of the soteriological exclusiveness of Paul's concept. It is not our intention to discuss the concept in its totality as it appears in the Pauline writings, which could result in a too superficial treatment of the matter. Rather we want to focus on the meaning of the crucial example of Abraham in Romans 4 and its bearing on Paul's concept, its soteriological exclusiveness, and its relationship to Christology.

We will begin with an overview of the various views on Paul's concept of justification by faith in Romans, which can roughly be grouped in three main parties. This will be followed by a closer look at the historical and textual context of Romans 1-4 which will provide the necessary contextual framework for our discussion. Having established an awareness of the various of views and of the context, we will then take a look at Romans 1-4, at the relation of the faith and law, faith and Christology, and the 'faith in God'-language. Up to this point we will avoid as far as possible looking at Abraham and his role in Paul's argumentation. It is rather our concern to discuss Paul's general flow of thought in relation to the various views. From this basis, we will then discuss Paul's use of Abraham and his paradigmatic function according to our findings. In conclusion we will have to discuss the obstacles for an application of our findings and suggest areas that may need some reconsiderations.

### THE TRADITIONAL VIEWS

#### **The clear Break between the Aeons**

The traditional view of Paul's concept of justification by faith has described Judaism as a legalistic religion of 'works righteousness'. Martin Luther said about the 'works of the law' in Romans that they are those "von denen man glaubt, sie





genügten an sich schon zur Gerechtigkeit.“<sup>1</sup> This operated for traditional Protestant scholars as the basic premise through which the figure of Abraham has been interpreted in the context of Romans 1-4. Various scholars have, of course, developed distinctive viewpoints on Paul's concept of justification by faith and Abraham's role in Paul's argumentation. The premise that Paul understood the Jewish religion to be a legalistic one in which one earns salvation through deeds remains dominant. To understand the significance of Abraham and his faith in Paul's thought, we will now consider how scholars of this persuasion have understood Paul's argument from Abraham in Romans 4 and its relation to the context.

Rudolf Bultmann saw in Paul's thought a clear break between the old aeon and the new.<sup>2</sup> The revealed *Heilsgeschehen* (Rom.3:21-26) is for him the eschatological event by which God ended the old aeon and began the new.<sup>3</sup> On this basis, Bultmann concluded that Rom.1:18-3:20 shows that Jews and Gentiles before the revelation of the δικαιοσύνη were under the ὀργή θεοῦ. In Rom.3:21-31 Paul argues that now through Christ's deed the δικαιοσύνη is available by faith and Rom.4:1-25 is given as the scriptural proof for this thesis.<sup>4</sup>

Agreeing with Luther, Bultmann thought that the Jews in Paul's thought were trying to find acceptance before God. For them, according to Bultmann, justification represents a very different notion than that that advocated by Paul: it is "die Erfüllung des Gesetzes, die Leistung von 'Werken', die das Gesetz vorschreibt."<sup>5</sup> By contrast, Paul argues that it is without 'works of the law', for οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ διὰ νόμου (3:21) stating in v.28 in summary the new 'condition' for the justification of human beings: λογίζομεθα γὰρ δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου. In brackets Bultmann adds here that πίστει has of course the sense of *sola fide*.<sup>6</sup> For Bultmann, therefore, faith apart from works

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, *Römerbrief*, p.129.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann's viewpoint is taken from his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*.

<sup>3</sup> Bultmann, p.278.

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann, p.278.

<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, p.280.

<sup>6</sup> Bultmann, p.280.

of the law is the only way to find justification and Abraham is the scriptural proof for the χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου and the πίστει on the basis of Gen.15:6.<sup>7</sup>

Faith is for him the radical contrast to καύχησις, which is "die sündige Grundhaltung des Juden (Rm 2,17. 23 ...) und ihre radikale Preisgabe ist die Haltung der πίστις."<sup>8</sup> Since Paul uses Abraham as scriptural proof, he argues that Abraham has no καύχημα (4:2). Bultmann understands Paul as arguing on the same line when he describes justification as a gift and χάρις (τοῦ θεοῦ) as the reason for the justification (3:24). Justification by faith and the justification by grace are thus the same thing,<sup>9</sup> and both stand in clear contrast to the works of the law. With the example of Abraham πίστις and χάρις are set up in opposition to the νόμος.<sup>10</sup> The promise given to Abraham is here reinterpreted as being dependent on faith and the law as working the ὀργή to confirm that the promise is given to the πίστις (4:15-16).

Χάρις is paradoxically for the sinner, for God is δικαίων τὸν ἀσεβῆ (4:5), which is confirmed by Rom.3:23f.: πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον ... δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι. The source of the δικαιοσύνη is to be found in God's χάρις, in his gracious deed through Christ.<sup>11</sup> For Bultmann the concept of justification by faith is thus closely related to and based on Christology.

This view of Rudolf Bultmann represents the view that there is a break between the aeons very well. Other scholars like Anders Nygren, Otto Kuss, and Leonard Goppelt have argued similarly.

Anders Nygren, for example, argued that with Abraham Paul is *not* discussing the question if and how the righteousness by faith confirms the law (3:31).<sup>12</sup> According to him the Jews understood Abraham as the type of the justified by the law whereby Paul in Romans 4 "entreibt Abraham den Vertretern der Gesetzesgerechtigkeit und stellt ihn statt dessen als *den Typus des durch den Glauben*

<sup>7</sup> Bultmann, p.281.

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann, p.281.

<sup>9</sup> Bultmann, p.281.

<sup>10</sup> Bultmann, p.282.

<sup>11</sup> Bultmann, p.284.

<sup>12</sup> Nygren, p.126.

*Gerechten* dar."<sup>13</sup> For Nygren Romans 4 was written by Paul to verify righteousness which comes by faith. He is specifically building on Romans 3:21 to show that the righteousness by faith is "attested by the law and the prophets".

Abraham as a scriptural proof represents for Nygren all that is necessary to demonstrate that πίστις stands in contrast to the 'works of the law' and that this is the only way to be justified.<sup>14</sup> Like Bultmann, Nygren argues that Paul is rejecting the boasting in Abraham's case, for if one is justified by faith there is no reason to boast, especially if Abraham is a sinner like everybody else (Rom.3:23; 4:5).<sup>15</sup>

According to Paul's contemporary Jews, Abraham was regarded as the beginning of their people and circumcision was the sign of their covenant relationship with God. Thus have only Abraham's natural descendants, who received the sign of circumcision, the possibility to receive the justification? Paul shows that it is not limited to Jews, for there is but one way for Jew and Gentile alike, the way of faith.<sup>16</sup>

As circumcision does not provide a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, so also the law is not the basis for the promise given to Abraham. Paul shows that the promise was connected to faith and not to the law, for the law brings wrath but the promise is given by grace through faith. The promise refers mainly to the present where man is justified by faith. For the promise was fulfilled in its deepest sense when the Gentiles believed in Christ and thus became children of Abraham.<sup>17</sup> Paul is thus interested in Abraham's paradigmatic function to show what faith is and means.<sup>18</sup> He is an example to be followed by the Christian, but is *only* a type and his faith is only analogous to (*entspricht*) the faith of the believers.<sup>19</sup>

Leonard Goppelt sums up this position as follows:

So ist Abraham Typus der aus Glauben allein gerechtfertigten Christenheit, nicht 'Typus' im profanen Sinn, musterhaftes Urbild einer Gattung, sondern im ntl

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<sup>13</sup> Nygren, p.127.

<sup>14</sup> Nygren, p.128.

<sup>15</sup> Nygren, p.129.

<sup>16</sup> Nygren, p.131.

<sup>17</sup> Nygren, p.134.

<sup>18</sup> Nygren, p.135.

<sup>19</sup> Nygren, p.138.

Sinn, von Gott gesetztes heilsgeschichtliches Vorbild derer, an denen sich sein Gottesverhältnis auf höherer Stufe durch Christus vollendet.<sup>20</sup>

We have so far summarised the traditional view that Paul, in the figure of Abraham, is arguing against the works of the law as opposed to the righteousness by faith. We have looked in particular at those scholars who have maintained that Romans 1:18-3:20 describes the old aeon of the wrath of God and that beginning in 3:21 Paul is concerned with the new aeon of the righteousness by faith. Abraham is for them a type of the Christian faith but does not have the same faith as Christians. He serves as a scriptural proof in Paul's argumentation on justification by faith.

### **The salvation historical Continuity**

We will presently outline the views of those scholars who also see Paul arguing against the 'works of the law', but do not think that Paul distinguishes so clearly between the old and new aeon. Scholars holding such a perspective (e.g. U. Wilckens, W. Schmithals, D. Zeller) state that "Abraham ist Glaubender im unverkürzten Sinn des paulinischen Glaubensverständnisses und insofern Beispiel des Glaubens und Vorbild der Glaubenden ..."<sup>21</sup> God has acted the same in the past as he does now. He justifies the godless by faith.<sup>22</sup> Abraham was thus for Paul the beginning of the *Heilsgeschichte* of faith.<sup>23</sup>

Similar to the scholars reviewed in the previous section, Paul's argumentation is understood to argue for the aeon of wrath in Romans 1:18-3:20 and the beginning of the new aeon of the righteousness of God with Romans 3:21ff. However, there is not such a clear break between the old and new aeon, for Christ through his soteriological deed in the new aeon is the one who even rescues the believer in the old aeon.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the old aeon, with its accusation against all humankind, does not simply cease; the accusation remains true even in the new aeon.<sup>25</sup>

Ernst Käsemann agrees to the salvation historical continuity, but contributes another opinion concerning the aeons or ages. The 'new' age is the age to come for

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<sup>20</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, p.166.

<sup>21</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.139.

<sup>22</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.105.

<sup>23</sup> Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.142.

<sup>24</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.184.

<sup>25</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.185.

Paul, which has entered the old with Christ and is expanding.<sup>26</sup> We have thus with the new aeon the 'already' and 'not yet' of its presence. Justification by faith is thus for Käsemann an eschatological event that is real now, but will find its fulfilment later.

This perspective is hence to be distinguished from the traditional interpretation, which draws a soteriological distinction between the two ages:

Abraham 'verheißt' also den Glauben nicht (Taylor, 47f.), sein Glaube ist nicht 'etwas Ähnliches' wie der christliche Glaube (Nygren, 138), und er ist auch kein 'Typus' des Glaubens, den er bloß strukturell vorabbildet (Goppelt, 40f.; vgl. Schlier, 121).<sup>27</sup>

Our considerations concerning the salvation historical continuity have not yet clarified why Paul draws on the Abraham story. For Jürgen Becker Abraham is the evidence that Paul is not rejecting the law, for Romans 4 clearly refers back to Rom.3:21+31.<sup>28</sup> Others still argue that Abraham is being used as a scriptural proof to underline what Paul claimed in 3:21.<sup>29</sup>

Wilckens, on the other hand, sees a clearer connection between Rom.3:27-31 with Romans 4 rather than with Rom.3:21. The connecting words for him are καύχημα (4:2) and χωρὶς ἔργων (4:5f.). Romans 4:1-8 discusses Rom.3:27f. Rom.4:9-12 shows that Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised (Rom.3:29f.). Romans 4:13-16 is related to Rom.3:31 by discussing the question of the law. Romans 4:17-22 shows what kind of faith Abraham had, so that Romans 4:23-25, which shows that the Christian faith is the same as Abraham's, can reveal that one and the same faith connects Abraham with his seed.<sup>30</sup> For Ulrich Wilckens the purpose of Romans 4 is thus to show the Christians their legitimate place in the history of justification by faith.<sup>31</sup>

Zeller observes another line of thought here. Romans 4:1-8 answers the question raised in Rom.4:1. He also finds no clear connection between Rom.4:9-12 and Rom.3:29f., but regards it as an independent unit that addresses the question of

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<sup>26</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.86.

<sup>27</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.139.

<sup>28</sup> Becker, *Paulus*, p.390.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.134f.; Zeller, *Römer*, p.96.

<sup>30</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.258.

who can receive the grace of God's justification. The same is true of Rom.4:13-17a, which treats the question of the law and functions to justify his statements in Rom.4:10ff. Wilckens and Zeller agree that the last section, 4:17b-25, describes what kind of faith Abraham had so that Gen.15:6 can be applied to the Christians.<sup>32</sup>

For Käsemann, the purpose of the example of Abraham is to show that faith already justified there and that it happened before his circumcision, so that the promise is valid only for the believer.<sup>33</sup> Schmithals, however, states that Paul's main interest is not to show through Abraham what justifying faith or justification by faith is. Nor is he interested in arguing for unity between the revelation of God in the Old Testament and now for the believer. Rather, Paul's main emphasis in Rom.4:9-18 is to show that Abraham is the father of all, Jew and Gentile.<sup>34</sup>

These various views about Abraham as scriptural proof for Paul's concept of justification by faith, as the proof that the law is upheld, that boasting is excluded, that Jew and Gentile are justified alike, or as the example of one having faith, will be discussed later.<sup>35</sup> However, we note the diversity of views on the purpose of Paul's use of Abraham even among those scholars who hold that there is a salvation historical continuity.

This diversity continues if one asks: who could be justified in the old age? Whom does Abraham represent there? In the new age a great majority of scholars would agree that Paul is arguing that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but what do these scholars say about the old aeon? Schmithals states that God gave the opportunity of having faith among the Jews before the Christ event as can be seen in the case of Abraham. In this sense 'the Jew first' (cf. Rom.1:16; 2:10) and after the Christ event the 'and also to the Gentiles' became true.<sup>36</sup>

Zeller states similarly that because of the soteriological Christ event the Gentile also has a chance to be justified through faith (3:27-30).<sup>37</sup> This implies that Jews in the old aeon could be justified by faith while the Gentiles could not. According to

<sup>31</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.283.

<sup>32</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.97.

<sup>33</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.99.

<sup>34</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.135.

<sup>35</sup> See 'The Purpose of Paul's use of Abraham' p.93-95 below.

<sup>36</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.139.

<sup>37</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.83.

this view salvation history is a unity, where nobody could ever be justified other than through the justification by faith that came through Christ. Abraham thus seized by faith the hidden reality of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

Wilckens does, however, go a step further by saying that it is crucial to note that Paul does not begin the universality of justification with the Christ event but with Abraham.<sup>39</sup> "Gott wollte von Urbeginn an – als der *eine* Gott, der er ist – die Beschnittenen zusammen mit den Unbeschnittenen im Glauben rechtfertigen (3, 30)."<sup>40</sup> One may infer that Wilckens understands Paul as saying in Romans 1-4 and especially in the case of Abraham that everyone, even the Gentiles, could be justified by faith in the old aeon. This view is likewise held by Becker for whom Abraham in Rom.3:21-4:25 becomes the prototype of the human being who has faith in God.<sup>41</sup>

The position of the salvation historical continuity raises thus some questions concerning the exclusiveness of the concept of justification by faith before the Christ event<sup>42</sup> and its relation to Christology,<sup>43</sup> which we will discuss later.

We can sum up by noting that although these scholars agree on the salvation historical continuity of the concept of justification by faith, there are differences between them concerning the efficacy of the concept in the old aeon and the purpose of Paul's use of Abraham. We will return later to these crucial questions. For the time being it is sufficient to note that there are such disagreements alongside their agreement on the salvation historical continuity over and against those who argue for a clear break between the aeons.

## THE TWO-COVENANT HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

A very different approach to Romans 1-4 and Abraham has been argued for by scholars like Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Lloyd Gaston, John G. Gager, Stanley K. Stowers, Markus Barth, and Paul M. van Buren. Some of them derive their hermeneutical starting point for their argumentation from the incidents against the

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<sup>38</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.167.

<sup>39</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.284.

<sup>40</sup> Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.121; cf. Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.142.

<sup>41</sup> Becker, *Paulus*, p.386.

<sup>42</sup> See 'The Law and Faith before the Christ Event' p.35-38 below.

<sup>43</sup> See 'The Efficacy of the Christ Event' p.64-72 below.

Jews in the second world war like in *Ausschwitz*.<sup>44</sup> They assume that the traditional view has been the basis for anti-Semitic attitudes since it draws a negative picture of Judaism. Jews who have not acknowledged Christ as their Messiah and Lord are legalistic. Scholars of this school began to interpret the New Testament and especially Paul in a different way, convinced that the traditional Pauline theology may have had results contrary to his original intention.

In Romans 1-4 Paul is now said to argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles and not for a general soteriological principle. Gaston for example states that "Rom 3:21-31 is clearly about the inclusion of the Gentiles ..."<sup>45</sup> Or Marquardt similarly says that the "*pistis*, wie Paulus sie verstanden haben will, hebt das Gesetz mit Bestimmtheit nicht auf, und das heißt völlig deutlich: *pistis* ist kein Gegenprinzip gegen *nomos*."<sup>46</sup> For these scholars the Torah is thus still valid for the Jews, but not for the Gentiles now included.

They agree that Paul's argument in Romans 1-4 is concerned with the inclusion of the Gentiles, the role of the Torah for them, and Jewish boasting, but they disagree on the function and centrality of some of the issues argued for by Paul. They agree that Paul is attacking the Jewish attitude of boasting in view of God's having opened a possibility of justification through Christ for the Gentiles. This justification is through a πίστις, which is not opposed to the law. Gentiles are justified on the basis of their πίστις and the Jews through the Torah. There are thus two ways to be justified, one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. What Paul is then arguing for is that the Jew can no longer boast since God has put the Gentiles and Jews on the same level. God has included the Gentiles by opening a possibility of justification through πίστις. However, by doing so the Torah has not been abrogated and the Jews have not been rejected; Jews are still justified through the Torah. The scholars agree on this basic construal of Paul's thought in Romans 1-4, but we will now turn to their disagreements on the issue of boasting and πίστις.

On the issue of boasting Gager holds that Paul does not establish the universal concept of justification by faith but rather attacks the Jewish attitude of boasting

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. Marquardt, *Schweigen*, p.9ff.

<sup>45</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.122.

<sup>46</sup> Marquardt, *Juden*, p.37.



since "God's righteousness (for Gentiles) has now been made manifest apart from the Torah, that is, it is no longer Israel's exclusive privilege."<sup>47</sup> This access to justification for Gentiles puts Jews and Gentiles on equal footing and leaves no room for Jewish boasting about their position before God. This view, according to which Paul is said to speak against Jewish boasting in general terms, is also held by Gaston.<sup>48</sup> Stowers disagrees with such a view. In his opinion Paul is not addressing all Jews in general terms, but a certain type of Jew. Paul corrects the teacher of the Gentiles of Rom.2:17-29. The teacher is a missionary, not sent to make them Jews but to lead them to a life where they live righteously and recognise the true God. The teacher tried to make the Gentiles righteous by teaching them to obey certain works from the law. He adopted a boastful attitude since he felt that he can help Gentiles to be justified by doing works from the law. "In 3:27f., the apostle censures his boasting. Christ's faithfulness removes any basis for the Jewish teacher's boasting because it renders his ethical program for gentiles irrelevant."<sup>49</sup> Paul's message was very different from that of the teacher's, for the Gentile is not justified by doing certain works of/from the law but through Jesus Christ. The scholars thus disagree in whether Paul addresses the Jews in general or just the teacher of Rom.2:17-29.

An issue of greater importance and disagreement is the role of πίστις for the Jews and Gentiles. We begin with Gager who has a more traditional understanding of πίστις than the other scholars. "Jews and Gentiles stand as equals before God on the basis of their faith. For Gentiles this faith has Jesus Christ as its focus (so 3:22, 26); for Jews, as Paul argued in 2:1-29, faith means doing the Torah rather than merely having it."<sup>50</sup> The traditional part of his view is that he understands the Gentiles to have faith in Christ. That he disagrees with the traditional view on the Jewish part is obvious. Paul is said to confirm for the Jew the soteriological efficacy of the Torah and for the Gentile justification through Christ. However, it is not the possession of the Torah that justifies. The Jew is rather asked to be faithful to it and God will then be righteous toward him.

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<sup>47</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.215.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gaston, *Torah*, p.122.

<sup>49</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.204.

<sup>50</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.217.

Marquardt has a very different understanding, arguing that faith is *no* new principle and certainly not opposed to the law. Gentiles can now be justified by faith and the Jews are meant to accept the new way of justification by faith as a possibility for the Gentiles.

Sie sollen sich in *pistis* an Jesus Christus halten, indem sie die eschatologische Stunde, den *nyn kairos*, den er jetzt heraufgeführt hat, wahrnehmen. Mit *pistis* wird den Juden ihr eigenes Kriterium konzidiert, nichts sonst: die Wahrnehmung der Weltveränderung. *Pistis* verbindet also Heiden und Juden miteinander. Aber *pistis* macht sie nicht gleich, es gibt einen jüdisch-nichtjüdisch verschiedenen Sinn der *pistis*.<sup>51</sup>

With such a view it is hard to see how Marquardt can maintain that πίστις is not a new principle. He obviously does not allow the Jews to be justified by faith rather than by the Torah. He might possibly mean that the Jews were always meant to accept the inclusion of the Gentiles, but on the other hand he clearly states that Christ is a *new* possibility for the Gentiles. What πίστις before Christ has meant for the Jews is not clearly expressed by him. Even if it is not clear how to understand his statement about the consistency of the principle of faith, it is clear that for Marquardt the Jewish faith is merely an attitude of accepting the Gentiles whereby faith for the Gentile has to be understood in the traditional sense. Gager and Marquardt thus agree on the πίστις of the Gentiles but differ in respect to the πίστις of the Jew. Marquardt understands it to be a positive attitude toward the Gentiles and Gager as doing the Torah.

Another understanding has been put forward by Gaston and Stowers. They follow Richard Hays in his suggestion that πίστις has to be understood as 'faithfulness' rather than 'faith' in Rom.3:26 and other instances.<sup>52</sup> For the interpretation of δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ (Rom.3:26) they claim that the Gentiles are *not* justified by having faith in Jesus. Rom.3:26 has to be read: "He did this to prove his own loving justice at this crisis in history so as to be just and to make right the person whose status springs from Jesus' faithfulness."<sup>53</sup> Christ was faithful to God's purposes by dying. On the basis of Christ's faithfulness God can

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<sup>51</sup> Marquardt, *Juden*, p.41.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Hays, *Christ*, p.170ff.

<sup>53</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.195.

now demonstrate his merciful justice towards the Gentiles. One is thus not justified by doing certain 'works of the law' or 'having faith'; it is rather an act of God's mercy through which sins are forgiven. This demonstrates God's righteousness, God's redeeming merciful justice, towards the Gentiles whom he now treats equally with the Jews. Very different to the preceding scholars, faith means for Jew and Gentile, as Christ, to be faithful. The Jew is meant to be faithful in doing the Torah and following Abraham's example and the Gentile is meant to be faithful in following Christ's example.

The scholars, therefore, do not agree on the meaning of πίστις. Gager and Marquardt take it for the Gentiles in the traditional sense, but disagree on its meaning for the Jews. Gaston and Stowers on the other hand reject the traditional view of 'Christian faith' altogether and argue that πίστις means 'faithfulness'.

The disagreement on whose boasting Paul corrects, does not have a significant affect on our discussion of Abraham and his role in Romans 4, but the understanding of πίστις does. On the basis of these different views, it is now appropriate to consider their understanding of Abraham, his πίστις, and his function in relation to the Jews and Gentiles.

Gaston states about Romans 4 that it

is not about Christian faith, but differing from Galatians it does speak of Abraham's faithfulness. Attempts to understand Abraham as a hero of faith to be imitated by Christian believers cause insuperable difficulties, which the commentators gloss over. Thus one cannot really say that the promise to Abraham came *through* the righteousness of his faith (v13) or that the inheritance *depends* on faith (v 16).<sup>54</sup>

Abraham does not need to be a 'hero of faith' for Gaston since Paul is not using Abraham as proof for his thesis of justification by faith. He is not a type of all believers, but an argument for God's righteousness, since God fulfilled with Christ his promise to Abraham. In Romans 4 Paul continues to affirm Israel's position before God and argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles. Consequently Gaston understands Rom.4:2 to mean that

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<sup>54</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.60.

Abraham was justified on the basis of works (cf. 2:13) and receives a reward, but that cannot be counted as grace for future generations. Verses 4 and 5 would then describe the same person (Abraham) under two different aspects, as the one who works and receives the reward and as the one who does not work and receives the promise for the future.<sup>55</sup>

The reward then would be that Abraham was justified and the promise that his descendants would inherit the world (Rom.4:13), i.e. that the Gentiles would be included. Saying that Abraham was justified on the basis of works is consistent with Gaston's argument that the Jews are justified by their faithfulness to the Torah and the Gentiles by their faithfulness to Christ's example.

Gager agrees with Gaston that Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles, but he says instead that the issue in Romans 4 is boasting. That the boasting of the Jews is misplaced is shown by Paul who uses Abraham to demonstrate that Jews and Gentiles are now fundamentally equal before God. The whole exposition of Gen.15:6 in Romans 4 "enables Paul to buttress his earlier claim in 3:27-31 that the principle of faith applies not just to Gentiles whose justification is through Christ, but to Jews whose justification is through the Torah."<sup>56</sup> Saying that we have to keep in mind that Gager understands 'faith' to have a different meaning for the Jew than for the Gentile. For the Gentile it has the traditional sense and for the Jew it is being faithful to the commandments of the Torah. With such a view on the Jews and the Torah Paul's underlying concern in Romans 4 is "to argue that the incorporation of Gentiles is fully consistent with God's promises and righteousness."<sup>57</sup>

The distinction drawn by Gager is picked up by Stowers. He too states that the language of Romans 4 distinguishes Jews and Gentiles yet provides them with a common basis. This common basis consists of the fact that Abraham is the father of the Jews as his natural descendants and likewise of the adopted Gentiles through Christ. The common basis also has the aspect that both are meant to share in and live out of Abraham's faithfulness. This means for Gentiles that they do not need to keep the law, while Jews continue "to have Abraham's trust in God's promises and to keep the covenants (including the law) established by Abraham and his

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<sup>55</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.125f.

<sup>56</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.218.

<sup>57</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.218.

descendants."<sup>58</sup> The failure of the Jews was not to accept Christ as the fulfilment of Abraham's promise given for the Gentiles and their justification. Therefore, the issue in Romans 4 is not to show the superiority of faith to law nor is Abraham used by Paul as a model for Christian faith. Paul uses Romans 4 to show that Jews and Gentiles receive their justification by sharing in Abraham's righteousness rather than establishing their own righteousness by doing certain works of the law. 'Works of/from the law' here means for Stowers the keeping of the Torah presented by the teacher to Gentiles as the solution for their moral weakness. Paul "rejects the teacher's claim that the gentiles, like Abraham (4:1-2), are justified by works of the law and that such justification provides a warrant for boasting."<sup>59</sup> Paul rather establishes that the Gentiles share in Abraham's righteousness as his descendants 'in Christ' through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's faithfulness brought redemption for the Gentiles and through it the promise to Abraham has been kept. Abraham and his descendant, Jesus Christ, founded lineages carrying God's grace and promises. All, both Jews and Gentiles, stand before God in sin (3:9-26), but they can and should "receive the gift and recognize their kinship by manifesting the characteristics of their ancestors."<sup>60</sup>

We may conclude that the two-covenant hermeneutical approach tries to establish a view of Paul's argument in Romans 1-4 that retains the law as valid for the Jews, excludes their boasting, and argues first of all for the inclusion of the Gentiles apart from the law. While Gager stresses that Paul argues against Jewish boasting since the Gentiles are now included, the other scholars state rather that Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles as an act of God's righteousness, so that all or some of the Jews can no longer boast. Abraham is *not* used in this context by Paul as a type of the believer nor as a scriptural proof of his concept of justification by faith over and against the law and its righteousness. It is rather argued that through Abraham's faithfulness the promise was given for the sake of the inclusion of Gentiles, a promise which found its fulfilment in Christ and his faithfulness. And through Abraham God has made a covenant which is still valid for the Jews.

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<sup>58</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.243.

<sup>59</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.249.

<sup>60</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.250.

## E. P. SANDERS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION

We have seen that the traditional view has been challenged by the two-covenant hermeneutical approach, but this has not been the only challenge to it. Krister Stendahl in his book *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* maintained that Paul is not focusing on justification by faith in Romans 1-4. Paul is rather arguing for the inclusion of the Gentiles and their justification apart from the law. For him Romans 1-8 is a preface "in which Paul argues that since justification is by faith it is equally possible for both Jews and Gentiles to come to Christ. ... both Gentiles and Jews are found equally culpable (Rom.3:9ff.), yet also equally capable of being saved through justification (Rom.3:21-30)."<sup>61</sup> By redefining the purpose of Romans he comes close to the traditional view, but Stendahl tries hard *not* to render the Jews legalistic. Paul argues that nobody is able to completely fulfil the law (Rom 2:17-3:20) and the salvation in Christ is thus preferable. However, according to Stendahl, Paul "should have been wrong in ruling out the Law on the basis that Israel could not achieve the perfect obedience which the Law required."<sup>62</sup> The Law did not require perfect obedience but was part of the covenant relationship in which there was room for forgiveness and repentance by God's grace.

This view has been established further by E. P. Sanders who surveyed the literature of Judaism from 200 BC to 200 AD in his book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. In his study he made use of the expression 'covenantal nomism', which he defined as "the view that one's place in God's plan is established on the basis of the covenant and that the covenant requires as the proper response of man his obedience to its commandments, while providing means of atonement for transgression."<sup>63</sup> The Jew is elected by God's grace to be in the covenant and his responsibility is to stay in the covenant by obedience to the law.

Paul's argument in Romans 1-4, therefore, has to be understood from a different angle to the traditional view that at least some of the Jews of the old aeon were legalistic. Paul saw in Christ the universal solution for Jew and Gentile and from there preceded the conviction of a universal plight. He did not consider the law

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<sup>61</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.29.

<sup>62</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.81.

<sup>63</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.75.

as something negative, but he could not maintain that justification could come through the law. For if it were by the law, not only the Gentiles would be excluded, but the death of Christ would have been in vain. Paul is, therefore, not arguing against Jewish self-righteousness, but that Jew and Gentile are equally sinners and in need of the justification by faith in Jesus Christ. With Abraham then he shows that one becomes his descendant by faith (Rom.4:13f.). However, not all of the terminology of Romans 4 speaks about becoming a member of a group, a descendant of Abraham, but refers to how one attains the right relationship to God.

With his studies on Judaism Sanders provided a basis by which scholars like Heikki Räisänen and James D. G. Dunn reconsidered Paul's writing in Romans. In contrast to Sanders, Räisänen states, like Stendahl,<sup>64</sup> that Paul draws an incorrect legalistic picture of Judaism. Räisänen claims, furthermore, that Paul was even aware of that.<sup>65</sup> He argues in Rom.1:18-3:20 that the law has to be fulfilled in every aspect and that nobody can do so. Räisänen argues that only Paul's argument for a soteriological thesis led him to radicalise the claim of the law, for no Jew of Paul's time would have stated this in such radical terms. Interestingly enough, "there are indications that at bottom Paul agreed with them."<sup>66</sup> This view holds, therefore, that Paul's thesis is a theoretical theological treatise of the subject rather than actually being rooted in the real life situation of the Jews and Gentiles of his time.

Taking such a position Räisänen understands Romans 1-4 as an argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles rather than an argument against Jewish boasting.<sup>67</sup> Paul is not against Jewish boasting but rather charges Jews for transgressing the law. There is in itself nothing wrong with boasting over the possession of the law. The problem is that the Jew transgresses the law (Rom.2) so that he cannot boast over its possession; the boasting is not negative. Räisänen tries to prove his point by saying that Paul does not condemn the boasting of God in Rom.2:17 (cf. 1.Cor.1:31) either.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, if the boasting were the real issue, Paul would have mentioned it in his similar argument in Galatians, which he does not. He concludes that Paul

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<sup>64</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.81.

<sup>65</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.109, 168.

<sup>66</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.109.

<sup>67</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.169.

<sup>68</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.170.

wishes to demonstrate that Jews transgress the law and are thus sinners like the Gentiles.

In Rom.3:27 Paul does not speak about a general human attitude of boasting of those outside of Christ. It refers to the Jews and their boasting, for it has to be seen in the light of Rom.2:17+23 where it is connected to the possession of the law. This means that "'Boasting' has in Rom 3.27 above all to do with the special status of the Jews, not with man's innate pride."<sup>69</sup> The special status provided for the Jews a means of justification from which the Gentile was excluded. However, with Christ God has given a new possibility of justification for *all*. The Jew no longer has any reason why he should be proud of the law and cling to a system which does not allow the Gentiles to be justified. "The point of Rom 3.27-30 is, as v.29f. emphatically states, *the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God*."<sup>70</sup>

By using Abraham Räisänen argues that Paul continues to advocate the inclusion of the Gentiles instead of focusing on the problem of boasting.<sup>71</sup> In Rom.4:2 Paul does not state that Abraham was in fact boasting; he simply points out that *if* one could be justified by the law, he could boast of it. According to Paul since nobody can be justified by the law boasting is excluded. Similarly he is not speaking against the notion of reward in Rom.4:4-5, for his real point is that no works of the law are required of the Gentile. Paul shows in Rom.4:6-8 (cf. Ps:1f.) from Scripture that not the one who works is blessed but the one who does not work and is counted righteous by God. In Rom.4:9-13 Paul is discussing the question of whether circumcision is of any importance for the one reckoned righteous. Again he is not arguing against the Jews but for the inclusion of the Gentiles when he shows that not only the natural and circumcised descendants of Abraham are heirs but also the uncircumcised believers. The same is shown in Rom.4:16 which expresses what Paul is aiming at throughout the whole passage: "salvation is by faith and the promise is by grace, in order that it would benefit *all* the seed of Abraham and not *only* the one ἐκ τοῦ νόμου."<sup>72</sup> For Räisänen Paul is actually affirming in Romans 4 that the promises belong to the circumcised. However, the new order requires faith based on

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<sup>69</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.170.

<sup>70</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.171.

<sup>71</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.171f.

<sup>72</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.172.



God's grace taking away the boundary of circumcision and opening up a justification for all. The figure of Abraham serves to illustrate Paul's point that there is a new order of faith which renders the old one invalid; the old order is too exclusive (of the Gentiles). This is the reason why Jew and Gentile ought to follow the new way of justification by faith. Therefore, for Räisänen the "issue is: either the law or Christ, not: either boasting or faith."<sup>73</sup>

James D.G. Dunn is not as radical in his approach as Räisänen. He does not go as far as saying that Paul was drawing a wrong picture of Judaism. Rather the opposite is true, for Paul did address the real issue of the Jews. For the Jews the law became an expression of their distinctiveness as the people chosen by God. It became an "identity marker" and "boundary",<sup>74</sup> a fence around Israel that helped them to be marked off from the sinners, the Gentiles. This self-understanding and attitude towards the non-Jews led to a sense of privilege. It was they who were chosen by God and given a covenant and law. Out of this law three particular laws assumed a place of priority to show their distinctiveness, namely circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath to which Paul refers as 'works of the law'.<sup>75</sup> These works of the law in themselves were not wrong but they led to an over-emphasis on the identification of the covenant promise and law with ethnic Israel. Paul was thus trying to undo this inappropriately close link so that the ethnic boundaries would no longer give a wrong meaning to the covenant promise and the grace of God. In addition, Paul's concern was to show that Christ was now the main channel for the saving purposes of God. Romans thus restates powerfully the Jewish covenant theology in the light of Christ.

According to Dunn Paul in Romans 2 is correcting the Jewish misunderstanding of the covenant theology. In Rom.3:9-20 he proceeds to show that all Jews and Gentiles are under the power of sin building on his argument of Rom.1:18-2:29. Using for the first time the phrase 'works of the law' in Rom.3:20, Paul spells out clearly that some Jews have misunderstood the role of the law. The law was meant to make them aware of their continuing need of God's grace and not as a confirmation of their position and favour before God. With Rom.3:21 Paul begins a new section of his argument that is meant to meet just the situation

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<sup>73</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.169.

<sup>74</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lxix; cf. Dunn, *Perspective*, p.307f.

described in Rom.1:18-3:20. 'Now' God has brought forth his final purpose for Israel and humankind by revealing his righteousness in the act of Jesus Christ and the faith in him. Paul stresses that this righteousness has been manifested 'apart from the law'. 'Apart from the law' has to be understood in the foregoing context for it "means apart from the law understood as a badge of Jewishness, understood as the chief identifying characteristic of covenant membership by those 'within the law'".<sup>76</sup> It is no longer possible by 'works of the law' to be part of the covenant community, for now God has manifested his righteousness through the Gospel that is actually continuing, completing, and fulfilling the law as it was originally intended with the law, for it is based on God's grace. And since all are in need of God's righteousness, all alike have to participate in this new righteousness by faith. This is the proper basis of 'doing the law', excluding all boasting (Rom.3:27).

With Abraham Paul is verifying his claim that justification is indeed without the 'works of the law'. Using Abraham "Paul is about to meet head on a widely current view of Abraham's faith as his *covenant faithfulness* – his loyalty to God and obedience to God's command even under extreme provocation."<sup>77</sup> This means that there already existed a quite well established view of Abraham as a pattern for a faithful Jew. Consequently, Paul had to argue his case well; otherwise his claim that the gospel of righteousness by faith is rooted in the law (Rom.1:16-17; 3:31) would fail. However, he wanted to use Abraham as his verification for he was the father of the nations to whom the founding promises had been given.

In his argument Paul shows that Abraham was justified apart from 'works of the law' and in particular, for Dunn, *the* work of the law, circumcision. From this Paul infers that Abraham's fatherhood was not restricted to the circumcised, but only to those who share Abraham's faith. Paul then clarifies the nature of Abraham's faith and in whom he believed. Paul is thus using Abraham "as the model of the proper creature, the man of faith who holds his whole life in total dependence on the life-giver, the model for all who thus believe, Gentile as well as Jew."<sup>78</sup> Instead of being a pattern for a faithful Jew, Paul has proven that Abraham is a pattern for the one

<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.158ff.

<sup>76</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.177.

<sup>77</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.226.

<sup>78</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.238.

who is justified by faith. He is not an argument for the 'works of the law' and the exclusive claim of the Jews, but for the righteousness provided by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus which has universal significance.

In summary we may say that with Stendahl and Sanders a new interpretation of Romans has begun. Contrary to the Lutheran traditional view that the Jews were legalistic, Sanders argues that the Jewish covenant with God was actually based on grace and that only 'staying in' the covenant was regulated by the obedience to the law. Taking up this position Räisänen concludes that Paul was actually drawing a wrong picture of Judaism and the law. The whole argument in Romans 1-4 is rather artificial, for Paul only argues against the Jewish covenant since the Christ event stands in opposition to the law. Justification by faith is universally applicable and the Jewish covenant community is exclusive, and since Paul is convinced of the concept of justification by faith, he has to reject the too exclusive Jewish covenant. In contrast to Räisänen, Dunn tries to give Paul's argument a more 'historical' setting by arguing that Paul was contending against an actual attitude of the Jews. They used certain 'works of the law' such as circumcision as boundary markers to the sinners, the Gentiles. Paul shows that these 'works of the law' have no soteriological efficacy and that the real attitude even for the Jew is to seek continually the grace of God. With Christ, then, God has now finally revealed a justification apart from 'works of the law' solely on the basis of faith. This new justification is the fulfilment and continuation of the law as it was meant to be understood under the old covenant. For Räisänen Abraham in his setting serves as an argument of Paul not against boasting but for the inclusion of the Gentiles, leaving the old covenant invalid. And for Dunn Paul uses Abraham to show how justification by faith, though apart from the 'works of the law', is nevertheless rooted in the law. Having shown that he becomes a model of how human beings ought to be in relationship to God, he is a model for all who believe.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL CONTEXT OF ROMANS 1-4

In this new section we will be concerned with putting the passage in question (Romans 1-4) within its historical and textual context. Placing this passage in its historical situation will aid us in understanding Paul's argument properly as it is in its textual context and will hopefully serve to minimise *eisegesis*. Firstly, we will attempt to describe the historical context, especially the purpose of Romans. Having discussed why Paul wrote the letter, the textual context of Romans 1-4 will become apparent. This will enable us to understand the importance and fundamental role of Romans 1-4 in the letter to Rome.

#### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul, the apostle, (Rom.1:1) is the undisputed author of the letter to the Romans and it is generally agreed that it should be dated in the 50s AD, most likely late 55 early 56 or late 56 early 57.<sup>1</sup> The place of origin is hinted at in Rom.15:25 where it says that he was about to journey to Jerusalem. Acts 20:3 informs us that Paul stayed for three months in Greece, most likely in Corinth; therefore most scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter from Corinth. Since the authorship, date, and place of writing are generally agreed on, we will move on to discuss Paul's purpose in writing, including a look at his and the recipients' situation.

In contrast to his other letters, Paul addresses in this letter an audience which does not know him personally. However, given that he met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth (Acts 18:1ff, cf. 1.Cor.16:19) and in Ephesus (cf. Acts 18:18f.) and that this couple are apparently now back in Rome (Rom.16:3-5), one may infer that he was able to gain at least some general information about the situation of the community there. Likewise the believers in Rome have heard about Paul, so that both sides were aware of each other and probably knew something about their theological positions.

Paul's purpose of writing seems to be well expressed in Rom.1:1-15 and 15:14-32. There he describes some of his circumstances and addresses his readers in a personal tone using the second person. In Romans 1:1-15 Paul thanks God for the

faith of the Romans that is known in the world (Rom.1:8) and that he plans to visit them (Rom.1:9-10, 13) which he has often intended to do. He, furthermore, wants to come to strengthen them with a spiritual gift (Rom.1:11). Then he corrects himself slightly saying that they might mutually encourage each other with their faith (Rom.1:12). Being an apostle he also wants to reap a harvest among them as among the rest of the Gentiles and is eager to "proclaim the Gospel"<sup>2</sup> to them (Rom.1:13-15). By this Paul expresses his desire to extend his apostolic influence. It also seems to show that he thinks that the Roman community consists mainly of Gentiles. On the other hand, Paul identifies himself with the Jews in Rom.4:1 when he says "Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh" and in Rom.16:3ff. there are listed some Jewish names. Furthermore, the argumentation in Romans becomes intelligible only if at least some Jews were part of the Roman community. That means that the Roman congregation probably consisted mainly of Gentile-Christians, but contained also some Jewish-Christians.

In Rom.15:14-32 Paul expresses his wish to go to Spain and "to be sent on" by them (Rom.15:24). Paul, as the 'apostle to the Gentiles' (Rom.15:18-24, 28), after having been sent and worked in the north-eastern area of the Mediterranean intends now to focus his mission on the north-western part of the Mediterranean. Rome as a centre of trade and transport and capital of the Empire would be ideal for such a purpose as some kind of missionary base to Spain. Thus it might well be that his intention to go to Spain had some influence on the content of the letter, for he might also have written such a detailed theological treatise that the Romans might be aware of and take his position. They would then be enabled to serve as a strong support for his missionary work and as the base that he would need for his missionary work in the west.

Paul also states that he will go to Jerusalem to present there a collection from the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (Rom.15:25-26). Paul asks the Romans to

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<sup>1</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.xliii.

<sup>2</sup> That Paul is not intending to make them Christians seems to be clear since he thanks God for their faith (Rom.1:8) which should be understood as Christian faith. "To proclaim the Gospel" could, therefore, refer to his Gospel as it is explained in this letter with his concept of justification by faith. Another solution would be to take the "to you also who are in Rome" as a general reference to the inhabitants of Rome (cf. Rom.1:15; Watson, *Paul*, p.103.).

support his journey by prayer (Rom.15:30) since he is obviously facing a difficult situation there (Rom.15:31-32). Jacob Jervell in *The Letter to Jerusalem* sees here one of the main purposes for writing the letter, thus the title.<sup>3</sup> He claims that Paul intends to inform the Romans with the letter about what he will be saying there so that he will gain their support. Paul Minear in *The Obedience of Faith: The Purpose of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans* thinks that there is a similar problem (which we will cover later) between the believers in Rome as there was between Paul and Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Paul thus intended with the collecting and delivering of the fund to test the loyalty of the Gentile congregations and to reconcile the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem with his mission to the Gentiles and his message of righteousness apart from the law. For the Roman congregation Paul had a very similar purpose in mind, so that "Paul's wishes in collecting and delivering the fund would be directly linked to his desires to reconcile the enemy camps in Rome."<sup>5</sup>

The purposes mentioned by Paul himself in Romans can, therefore, be summarised as the extension of his influence to Rome (and possibly the extension of his 'Gospel'), support for some kind for his missionary enterprise to Spain, and support (i.e. prayers) for his trip to Jerusalem, and most likely to address a similar problem in the Roman community to that in the Jerusalem community. To this we will now turn.

The community in Rome as already mentioned consisted mainly of Gentiles. Most likely it was founded by Roman Jews who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and proclaimed in the synagogues in Rome the Gospel (cf. Acts 11:19-21; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8). It would be most natural to assume they were then joined by Jews and God-worshipping Gentiles (i.e. proselytes). Disturbances later caused the Jews to be expelled in 49 AD because of the 'Chrestus' (i.e. Christ).<sup>6</sup> Only the Gentiles-Christians remained in Rome, but with the death of Claudius in 54 AD the edict had become a 'dead letter' so that Jews could return to Rome (cf. Rom.16:3). In the meantime a conflict arose concerning how much the Torah had to be kept by Jew and Gentile (Rom.11:17-25; 12:3, 16;

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<sup>3</sup> Jervell, *Letter*, p.61ff.

<sup>4</sup> Minear, *Obedience*, p.1ff.

<sup>5</sup> Minear, *Obedience*, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> *Claudius* 25.4

14:3). This conflict was present in churches like Corinth, Galatia, Phillipi and Thessalonica (cf. 2.Kor.11:4; Gal.2:11-3:29; Phil.3:2ff.; 1.Thess.2;5ff.) and was possibly brought into the Roman church by the Jews returning from the exile.<sup>7</sup>

Minear has argued that Romans 14 distinguishes between different groups, the 'weak' and 'strong'. He states that Paul addresses five different groups, but this seems to go far beyond the evidence and one might wonder how Paul should have known the Roman community so well. Francis Watson in *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles* sees another conflict. He divides the Roman congregation in two distinct groups, into 'Jewish Christians' and 'Gentile Christians', whereby the former group might include proselytes and the latter one Jews who like Paul did not observe the law.<sup>8</sup> These two congregations did not worship God together so that one purpose of Romans was to lay aside the differences over the law and to worship together. Paul's objective was, therefore, "to persuade members of the Roman Jewish Christian congregation to separate themselves from the Jewish community and to recognize and unite with the Pauline gentile Christian congregation."<sup>9</sup> According to Watson Paul's main purpose is to convert the Jewish Christians to his theological position, to the freedom from the law to unite the Roman congregation.

In response to Watson Dunn lists several reasons why he regards this view as incorrect.<sup>10</sup> Firstly, the division made by Watson is too simplistic since the Roman congregation consisted probably of several house churches. Secondly, Paul argues for unity rather than for a divorce from the Jewish community (cf. Rom.3:25-26; 4:16; 11:11-32; 15:27). He is, thirdly, arguing for mutual acceptance of the 'weak' and 'strong', and not to change the one into the other. And finally the intermingled Jewish/Gentile names in Rom.16:3-16 seem to hint at mixed groups rather than mere Jewish and Gentile ones.

It is generally agreed upon that Paul is addressing tensions of the Roman community, which might be a conflict about the Torah as a whole or only about food habits. The view that he addresses a conflict about dietary regulations seems,

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<sup>7</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.11-13.

<sup>8</sup> Watson, *Paul*, p.95; It is for example far more likely that Priscilla and Aquila who had joined Paul in his mission of the Gentiles had the Pauline viewpoint and not that of the Jewish community.

<sup>9</sup> Watson, *Paul*, p.141f.

however, not to be able to explain Rom.14:20f. properly. For the abstinence of wine and meat clearly suggests a concern with ceremonial uncleanness through food that is not kosher. In addition, Paul is talking about the observance of certain days (Rom.14:5), which certainly refers to the observance of days set by the Torah. All this shows that Paul is not only talking about food habits, but also about the observance of the Torah. Wilckens finds here a close similarity to the situation in Corinth (cf. 1.Cor.8:1-13; 10:23-11:1) where the weak tried to stay ceremonially clean through their observance of the law while the strong said 'All things are lawful' (1.Cor.10:23) or 'Everything is clean' (Rom.14:20).<sup>11</sup> We thus have a conflict that is present both in Corinth and Rome and, as Jervell rightly noted, between Jerusalem and Paul.<sup>12</sup> Jervell overemphasised the issue about Paul's conflict with Jerusalem and neglected too much the internal conflict of the Roman congregation, but it is certainly true that the dispute in these different churches is of fundamental character and thus of primary importance. As we have noted earlier that the Roman community was a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles. However, we cannot with Minear be too precise about the diverse positions of the different house churches in this dispute, or with Watson divide the conflict into only two parties, whereby Paul's aim was to separate the Jewish and the Christian community and make them agree with his position. Rather it seems right to see Paul addressing the issue of Torah observance as an existing conflict in the Roman Christian community, whereby the conflicting parties consist of mixed Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul was, therefore, addressing in Romans an issue that he would have to face in Jerusalem and that was present in the Roman congregation.

In summary we may say that Paul had several purposes of writing which were related to each other. The purposes of which we are aware were, firstly, his missionary enterprise to Spain and the indication that he might want to use Rome as his base for it. Secondly, the tensions in the Roman community over the observance of the law. Thirdly, Paul wishes to seek support regarding his imminent visit to Jerusalem. The latter two are closely related since the Roman congregation can only support him on his journey to Jerusalem once they themselves come to terms with

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<sup>10</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lvii.

<sup>11</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.41.



their internal problem concerning the observance of the law, which Paul is facing in Rome.

We have not discussed one view yet. It is the popular position that Paul was actually writing his 'testament', a theological treatise of his faith and gospel.<sup>13</sup> Having considered the above purposes of writing it would seem fairly unreasonable to think that Paul was trying to write a 'testament'.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Paul was already advanced in years (Rom.15:19+23), so that he might have been interested in writing down his 'theology'. Facing such a fundamental discussion in Jerusalem, he might have taken the opportunity in his letter to the Romans by addressing the real life situation among the Roman congregation to spell out what his faith and gospel is and why he holds this position. He does not explicitly say so, but it makes sense to acknowledge this as an additional purpose of writing. If this 'additional' purpose may be in some sense considered true, it will add to the importance of Romans 1-4 as we will see below. In general these purposes give the letter a certain form of argumentation that accords Romans 1-4 a key role, since the rest of the argumentation is built on it. This we will show in our discussion of the literary context of Romans 1-4.

## THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF ROMANS 1-4

### General Observations

Romans is framed by the introductory and the concluding section (Rom.1:1-15 and 15:14-16:23). From these main passages we draw the purposes of writing apart from the one just mentioned. However, for the rest of the letter the style of writing changes into a theological and quite impersonal one with hardly any personal tone as one would expect in a letter to a specific congregation. The form of the letter has thus a very different outlook to the other letters Paul himself wrote. But the non-conformity to a pattern does not help us come to any conclusions concerning the authorship of certain parts or a disunity of the letter since "the chief force of the letter

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<sup>12</sup> Jervell, *Letter*, p.61ff.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Dodd, *Romans*, p.xxv; Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.12ff.; Michel, *Römer*, p.20.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.47f.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bornkamm, *Paulus*, p.103-111.

lies in its *distinctive* Pauline art and content.<sup>15</sup> If Paul had followed a pattern in his other letters it was probably not on purpose but rather unconsciously so that we might well suppose that he simply used another style in Romans according to his purpose for writing. It makes full sense that Paul, at the conclusion of his treatise, states his specific request of support on the assumption that they first needed his teaching before they could and would meet his need. The letter to the Romans is in its style coherent.

The importance of Romans 1-4 as the foundation of the rest of the letter could be diminished if Romans were self-contradictory or edited by a redactor. As we have noted earlier some scholars like Räisänen have stated that Paul was contradicting himself in some of his statements.<sup>16</sup> It has been argued that Romans 9-11 was a preformed unit<sup>17</sup> or that Romans is a combination of two letters.<sup>18</sup> Schmithals argues that a redactor combined two letters of Paul to the Romans (Romans A + B). The letters are said to have different purposes of writing and the historical circumstances explain the different style in Romans A + B. According to Schmithals does Romans A consist of 1:1-4:25; 5:12-11:36; 15:8-13 and Romans B of 12:1-21; 13:8-10; 14:1-15:4a, 7, 5-6; 15:14-23; 16:21-23; 15:33. Romans 16:1-20 is part of the letter to Ephesus and Rom.5:1-11; 13:1-7, 11-14; 15:4b; 16:25-27 are part of the redaction with some additional parts of different origin (Rom.2:16; 6:17b; 7:25b; 8:1).<sup>19</sup> The divisions of Romans seem to be unnecessary when we take into account that Paul in writing Romans met the purposes of writing mentioned above throughout the letter.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in writing the letter Paul had to be careful since he was addressing Jews and Gentiles with mixed positions towards the law so that it seems reasonable to suppose that Paul wrote at times apologetically and at others pastorally. The themes that run through the letter argue for its unity too.<sup>21</sup> They are, firstly, 'the Jew first but also the Greek', which is the argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles. The second is the subject of the righteousness of God, the righteousness by faith, and the

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<sup>15</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lix.

<sup>16</sup> Räisänen, *Paul*, p.106f.

<sup>17</sup> Dodd, *Romans*, p.148f.

<sup>18</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.25-29

<sup>19</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.28f.

<sup>20</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lxif.

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lxiif.

faithfulness of God. Paul argues throughout that God has kept his promises to the Jews and now with Christ likewise to the Gentiles, which proves his faithfulness. The last theme, God's faithfulness, together with the theme of keeping his promises is necessarily concerned with the law and its relation to the Jews and Gentiles. The purposes of writing, the situation of the Roman congregation, and the themes present throughout Romans support the view that Romans is internally consistent and the importance of Romans 1-4 not lessened.

### **The Specific Context**

Having argued for the unity of Romans we will turn to Romans 1-4 and its place in Paul's argument. We have already discussed the various views on Romans 1-4 and Abraham in our introduction, but will now consider how recent interpreters see its relation and position in regards to the rest of Romans.

#### ***The traditional View & Sanders' Adherents***

We will treat the traditional view and those who follow Sanders' view together since those who hold Sanders' view also argue that Paul in Romans 5:1-15:13 is showing how the concept of justification by faith can be applied to the believer and justified in regard to God's faithfulness.

On the one hand, those who follow Sanders have taken the position that Romans 1-4 is either not or wrongly speaking against Jewish righteousness by works of the law. The Jews were saved by God's grace and the law and its obedience kept them in their covenant with God. However, Paul is now arguing for a new concept, the concept of justification by faith that supersedes the old covenant so that all, Jew and Gentile, are to be justified by faith. On the other hand, those who hold the traditional view take Romans 1-4 as an argument for the sinfulness of all humankind, that in this age all have to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and that the law has no soteriological efficacy.<sup>22</sup>

Several scholars take the following chapters 5-8 as building on the preceding argument, so that there Paul discusses what it means to live through justification by

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<sup>22</sup> See 'The salvation historical Continuity' p.5-8 above.

faith.<sup>23</sup> He shows what this promised life is like and the effects this has on believers. Paul's aim for this section is thus to show that through faith justification the believer is free from the wrath of God (Rom.5:1-21), sin (Rom.6:1-23), law (Rom.7:1-25), and death (Rom.8:1-39). Other scholars have argued that Romans 5 is the summary of Romans 1-4.<sup>24</sup> Romans 1-5 thus treats the question of justification and Romans 6-8 the sanctification of the believer, building on the preceding section. Dunn, furthermore, claims that Romans 5 functions also as a bridge since Romans 5 is worked out by Romans 6-8 and Romans 9-11.<sup>25</sup> Rom.5:1-11, which Dunn describes as the passage about the individual, is worked out in Romans 6-8 and Rom.5:12-21, the passage about the whole humanity, is worked out in Romans 9-11. In Romans 6-8 Paul is discussing mainly the key categories of sin, death, law, and flesh and the role they do or do not continue to have for the believer. A very different view was proposed by Zahn about a hundred years ago. He claims that Rom.5:1-11 concludes Romans 1-4 and Rom.5:12-21 introduces the following section,<sup>26</sup> whereby Kuss and Althaus consider Romans 5 as an independent unit.<sup>27</sup> Certainty about the position of Romans 5 in the development of Paul's thought can hardly be achieved. Yet, we will consider it as the beginning of the new section since Rom.5:1-11 takes up briefly the statements of Romans 1-4, but then mainly introduces the following and is consequently a transitional part belonging to Romans 6-8.<sup>28</sup>

Dodd considers chapters 9-11 to be an originally separate unit, since it seems strangely disconnected to the subject of Romans 1-8.<sup>29</sup> Others have called it Paul's teaching on the doctrine of predestination, a theodicy, or his view on history.<sup>30</sup> However, most scholars see a strong link to the preceding section (esp. Rom.3:1ff.), stating that Paul is treating the question why God rejected the elected people of Israel

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<sup>23</sup> E.g. Nygren, *Römerbrief*, 142; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.123; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.98f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.393f.; Michel, *Römer*, p.113.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.286f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.242f.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.243.

<sup>26</sup> Zahn, *Römer*, p.261.

<sup>27</sup> Althaus, *Römer*, p.46, Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.198f.

<sup>28</sup> For more reasons cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.97f.

<sup>29</sup> Dodd, *Romans*, p.148f.

<sup>30</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.282; Michel, *Römer*, p.288f.

and what happened to God's promises about Israel and his faithfulness.<sup>31</sup> Paul has to show "daß kein Gegensatzverhältnis zwischen der Glaubensgerechtigkeit und den Verheißungen Gottes besteht."<sup>32</sup> If his argument fails here his argumentation in Romans 1-4 was invalid too. Romans 9-11 is thus the solution to the problem that is created in Romans 1-8.

Romans 12:1-15:13 has been called the ethical part of the letter. Paul begins here to 'urge' (Rom.12:1) the Romans and to treat real life situations. This part of Romans is not part of a second letter,<sup>33</sup> but is the practical application of the teaching of Romans 1-8.<sup>34</sup> Paul explains here what it means to be justified by encouraging the believers to live 'in love' (Rom.12:9f.) and 'in Christ' (Rom.13:14). Before he comes to his personal greetings and plans in Romans 15:14-16:27, Paul has to deal with the problem of the Roman congregation between the 'weak' and 'strong' (Rom.14:1-15:13). In this sub-section Paul can again explain his teaching of Romans 1-8 by showing how a believer ought to live a life in love (Rom.14:15).

In conclusion, Romans 1-4 is the foundation on which the whole of the following letter stands. There Paul establishes the claim of the justification by faith and in the rest of the letter Paul explains what the gained life is like, how God can still be called truthful, just, and faithful, even though Israel has been rejected. In Rom.12:1-15:13 then Paul shows how the concept of justification by faith must have implications for the life of the justified in the congregation. This shows the importance of Romans 1-4; it is the theological basis for Paul's argumentation in the letter. It remains for us to discuss the contribution of the proponents of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach.

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<sup>31</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.214f.; Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.254f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.321ff.; Zeller, *Römer*, p.170f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.540f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.243ff.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.518f.

<sup>32</sup> Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.257.

<sup>33</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.29.

<sup>34</sup> Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.293f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.311; Zeller, *Römer*, p.205; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.637f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.705.

### *The two-covenant hermeneutical Approach*

In rather general terms, the view of the two-covenant hermeneutical approach in Romans 1-4 is that Paul is not arguing for the concept of justification by faith for all, but only for the Gentiles. He is maintaining that the covenant with the Jews and consequently their law is still valid, but that God has now opened up the possibility of justification for the Gentiles which is by faith.<sup>35</sup>

The problem we face is that most of the secondary literature adopting this perspective is not in commentary form but problem orientated.<sup>36</sup> This means that the proponents of the two-covenant hermeneutical approach, except Stowers, have mainly used the scriptures that they think are central to the argument of Romans and have left the rest of the book of Romans for a later discussion. From this one might wish to infer that they want to establish a view that provides the foundation for the re-interpretation of the texts not mentioned. Since they consider only these few texts as important, we will reflect on the texts that are used by each scholar. Having considered their views, we will discuss later if the claims made for Romans 5-15, which are based on Romans 1-4 can be maintained or whether their basis, the view of Romans 1-4, already fails.

Little has been said about Romans 5-8. Gaston and Marquardt, like most of the traditional scholars, consider it to be a passage about the Christian life, the life of one who is justified by faith.<sup>37</sup> This would exclude for them the Jews and their covenantal position before God about which Paul is not speaking here. Stowers, however, states that in Romans 5-8 Paul speaks about how Gentiles obtain obedience and life in Christ.<sup>38</sup> Romans 5 refers to Christ's 'faithfulness' and Romans 6-8 explains how the Gentiles may become obedient by relating themselves to Christ's obedience. Rom.6-8 deals with the transformation of the Gentiles who are in Christ, and focuses on their new found freedom.

The major section is of course Romans 9-11. Stendahl considers it to be the centre of Romans and Romans 1-8 as the preface to it.<sup>39</sup> The other scholars are not so

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<sup>35</sup> See 'The two-covenant hermeneutical Approach' p.8-14 above.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. Barth, *People*; Gaston, *Torah*.

<sup>37</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.117; Marquardt, *Juden*, p.39.

<sup>38</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.251f.

<sup>39</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.4.

bold to place it in the centre of the argument of Romans.<sup>40</sup> But together with Stendahl they state that Paul discusses here the relationship between the two communities and their coexistence. It is a glorification of God's faithfulness for he has proved to be faithful to his promises.<sup>41</sup> Like Romans 1-4 it treats the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles that the Jews have failed to acknowledge but which they will once do.

Rom.14:1-15:13 is the next passage Gaston and Marquardt refer to. Gaston states that Paul is again discussing the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>42</sup> Marquardt, on the other hand, claims that Paul is speaking about Jewish and Gentile Christians and tries to show how the actual life together ought to look like, that each party should accept the other as it is.<sup>43</sup>

Stowers states that Romans 12-15 "sketches an ethic of community based on the principle of faithfulness as adaptability to others."<sup>44</sup> This means for him that one should act towards others positively not just if they are like oneself but also when they are different. This ethic argued for by Paul in Romans 12-15 can only be established and make sense on the basis of Romans 1-11.

We may summarise that for Stendahl Romans 1-4 is a part of the preface to Romans 9-11 and for the others it is the beginning of Paul's argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles. Thus if Paul gives in Romans 1-4 the theoretical basis for his later arguments, the whole of the two-covenantal hermeneutical view rests on Romans 1-4. It is, therefore, crucial to discuss their arguments on Romans 1-4, for if their position cannot be maintained there, their position cannot be maintained for the rest of the letter either.

From this brief outline of the different views concerning Paul's general argumentation and thought in Romans, we have seen that Romans 1-4 for all scholars plays a key role in Romans (even though it is not central for Stendahl). It is said about Romans 1-4 that either Paul argues that now all have to be justified by faith or that it is his main argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles. On this basis Paul builds

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<sup>40</sup> Barth, *People*, p.13f.; Marquardt, *Juden*, p.43f.; Gaston, *Torah*, p.13f.; Stowers, *Rereading*, p.171f.

<sup>41</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.171f.; Gaston, *Torah*, p.150.

<sup>42</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.133.

<sup>43</sup> Marquardt, *Juden*, p.28.

the whole of his further argumentation and its relevance for the life of the justified in the congregation. This means Romans 1-4 is the basis on which Paul can address his purposes of writing, especially the possible conflict among the Romans which he will probably have to face in a similar form in Jerusalem. It, furthermore, means that if the one or other view proves true for Romans 1-4, it may be inferred that it is also the proper view for the rest of the letter.

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<sup>44</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.318.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH IN ROMANS 4

So far we have given a brief summary of the different views on Paul's thought in Romans 1-4 and Abraham and we have discussed the historical and textual context of this passage. The following part of the thesis will discuss the character of Abraham's faith in Romans 4. Our study will try to clarify what bearing the example of Abraham has on Paul's concept of justification by faith, the question of its soteriological exclusiveness, and its relationship to Christology. We will begin our discussion with the relation of Paul's concept of faith to the law in Romans 1-4 in relation to Jew and Gentile, and the relationship between faith and Christology. On the basis of our findings we will then discuss in particular the 'faith in God'-language of Paul in Romans 1-4. The whole of the discussion will provide us with a general understanding of the significance of Paul's argument about faith without taking too close a look at Abraham himself. This will be done in the following section where we will discuss if and how Abraham reflects Paul's argument about faith.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT ABOUT FAITH

#### **The Law**

In the introduction we have already met different positions concerning the role of the law in relation to faith. One argues that the works of the law stand in contrast to faith (traditional view). The other draws a soteriological distinction between the Jewish covenant and the new one (two-covenantal hermeneutical approach; Sanders' view). The position held by the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach and Sanders can be differentiated further. The latter holds that the law, with respect to sin, lost its soteriological efficacy for the Jews in view of the Christ event; the old covenant for Paul pales in comparison to the new sphere of Christian existence. The two-covenantal hermeneutical approach, on the other hand, holds that the Jewish covenant is still valid for them and that the concept of justification by faith apart from the law is the new form of righteousness for the Gentiles.

We have noted, of course, that each of these basic positions has been subject to considerable nuance. Our concern will be to discuss these different opinions by trying

to understand which relation the law in Paul's letter to the Romans might have to the concept of faith. To reach this aim, we have to pose the question of how the law was related to the concept of faith before the Christ event. An answer to this question will certainly influence how we understand the issue of whether the relation of the law to faith has changed after the Christ event. By speaking about these relations we will have to treat separately the respective situation of the Jews and Gentiles.

### ***The Law and Faith before the Christ Event***

The contribution of Sanders that the law for the Jew was not the means to achieve righteousness has caused scholars to reconsider the role of the law among the Jews. Sanders argued that the Jew knew that he could only be justified by the merciful deliverance of God.<sup>1</sup> By God's mercy he entered the covenant and the law was the means to stay in it. But John Stott noted critically that also the 'staying in' is dependent only on the mercy of God, so that the law cannot even be the means to stay in the covenant.<sup>2</sup> Which meaning then did the law and faith have before the Christ event if faith was already present at that time?

### **Salvation historical Continuity**

We will first try to clarify if the concept of faith was already present before the Christ event which some scholars of the traditional view dismiss as impossible. In answering this question, it will become even more apparent that there is a salvation historical continuity. In a rather fierce debate this issue has been discussed between Günter Klein and Ulrich Wilckens.<sup>3</sup> The limits of this thesis do not allow us to review the debate fully.<sup>4</sup> However, one of the main issues has been how Paul could use the figure of Abraham to explain the concept of justification by faith, which would be especially problematic if one supposes that there was no justification by faith before the Christ event.<sup>5</sup> Klein, who holds the view that the concept of faith is a new concept after the Christ event, can only respond to this question by declaring,

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.421f.

<sup>2</sup> Stott, *Romans*, p.27.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.145-179; Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.112-127; Wilckens, *Römer 3,21-4,25*, p.586-610 for the discussion, cf. further Klein, *Präliminarien*, p.234-243 for Klein's struggle with the salvation historical continuity.

<sup>4</sup> See 'Abraham, the type of the old Aeon' p.106-109 above.

unconvincingly, that the "Kontingenz Abrahams als einer Gestalt historischer Vergangenheit spielt in diesen Versen keine Rolle, und Paulus demonstriert hier an Abraham als an einem Modell einfach die Strukturelemente des Rechtfertigungsgeschehens."<sup>6</sup> That Abraham serves Paul as a mere model without having actually received the justification by faith seems to be very unreasonable when we consider Paul's language about Abraham that draws precisely on an historical awareness (Rom.4:10-11). Klein calls the form of faith before the Christ event *Vorglauben* which is said to make the righteousness of God after the Christ event necessary. However, it seems rather weak to claim that Abraham's righteousness by faith is unequal to the righteousness by faith after the Christ event, for Paul is clearly drawing a parallel between Abraham's faith and that of Christians (Rom.4:22-25).<sup>7</sup> Another critique of his view, which we will discuss below in greater depth is that Paul is explicitly stating that those Jews who followed Abraham's example are his children in the sense that they too were justified by faith (Rom.4:12+16). Interestingly enough, he is not adding a qualifier to his statement that it refers either to the Jews before the Christ event or after the Christ event. The statement thus seems to be generally true including Jews before and after the Christ event. There seems thus to be a salvation-historical continuity from Abraham to the present time, which is also an argument for the faithfulness and righteousness of God. These crucial arguments reflect well the weakness of Klein's argumentation and why other scholars have followed Wilckens by arguing that the concept of faith *was* present before the Christ event.

#### The Jews and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event

The next major issue to be addressed is the question for whom the concept of justification by faith was available. We have argued that the concept of justification by faith was active before the Christ event, but was it actually available for all Jews? This question should be extended further by asking if the concept of justification by faith was limited to the Jews or if Gentiles could be justified by faith before the

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<sup>5</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.145-179.

<sup>6</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.153.

<sup>7</sup> This is touching on the subject of Abraham's function as a model, which we will discuss later. See 'Paul's use of Abraham – a Model?' p.106-121 below.

Christ event? Paul seemingly takes much pains to argue for the justification apart from the works of the law, but is this argumentation applicable only to the time after the Christ event? To formulate this differently, why should the concept of justification by faith be accessible for Abraham who was at that time not circumcised and then be restricted to the Jews only or not even to them?

In part we will answer these questions now in discussing whether the concept of justification by faith was restricted only to a few cases (e.g. Abraham, David) or if it was accessible for all Jews. Our observation that the concept of justification by faith was available before the Christ event, and the fact that Paul argues for justification by faith apart from the law point to the conclusion that all Jews were meant to be justified apart from the law like Abraham. Circumcision as a work of the law was but a seal for Abraham's justification and was meant to be so for the Jews (Rom.4:11-12). To verify this claim we will have to take a closer look at Rom.4:11-12 and its statement that circumcision was a sign and seal of Abraham's justification so that he would be the ancestor of πάντας, the uncircumcised Gentile and circumcised Jew who follow the example of Abraham's faith. The translation of Rom.4:12 is plain apart from the second τοῖς before the ἔχνεσιν. This τοῖς implies that a new group is been spoken of. Scholars have tried to give the τοῖς some meaning by explaining who these two groups are,<sup>8</sup> others have ignored the presence and problem of the τοῖς,<sup>9</sup> or they have dropped and ignored it even though there exists no textual tradition without it.<sup>10</sup> Käsemann and Fitzmyer understand the first τοῖς to speak about the physically circumcised (Jews in general) and the second τοῖς as speaking about the spiritually circumcised (Jewish Christians).<sup>11</sup> This option is rejected by those scholars who drop the τοῖς since the clear sense of the sentence seems to be that both times the same Jews are meant. It "is also ruled out grammatically by the position of the previous definite article in the Greek in relation to the words represented by 'not' and 'only'."<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the syntax is awkward

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<sup>8</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.109ff.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.381f.

<sup>9</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.101; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.142.

<sup>10</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.89; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.265f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.185f.; Michel, *Römer*, p.104, Footnote 4; Dunn, *Romans*, p.210f.

<sup>11</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.109ff.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.381f.

<sup>12</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.89.

if one adopts the view denoting two groups. For two groups one would rather expect οὐ τοῖς.<sup>13</sup> It is, therefore, more likely that Paul or one of the earliest copyists made a mistake, so that the second τοῖς should be ignored and the sentence be translated as addressing one group, i.e. the circumcised believing Jews.

On the basis of this consideration, we have to consider with which Jews Paul is concerned with, those before or after the Christ event. Paul's reference to circumcision and the law indicates that he is concerned with the time before the Christ event, for Rom.4:12 is first of all not limited in any form to the Jews after the Christ event.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Paul states in Rom.4:13 that the promise did come (past tense) to his descendants through the righteousness of faith. The interpretation that seems most convenient is that Paul is referring here to the time before the Christ event. He is, therefore, arguing for the salvation historical continuity of his concept of justification by faith. The Jews were also meant to be justified by faith like Abraham.

#### The Jews, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith

Having taken the position that the Jews were meant to be justified by faith, Paul had to explain the meaning of the works of the law. Looking at circumcision, *the* work of the law, we discover that he is not arguing against it, but rather is giving it a new meaning. He calls it a 'sign' and 'seal' (Rom.4:11). Most scholars agree that Paul has Gen.17:11 in mind where circumcision is called the 'sign of the covenant' (εἰς σημεῖον διαθήκης, LXX), which was understood to mark off those who belong to the covenant. It was intended to point to the covenant made with God. Paul leaves out the 'covenant' and redefines circumcision as the sign of the righteousness that Abraham received through faith.<sup>15</sup> Faith, not circumcision, is the basis for receiving righteousness. Circumcision is meant to point to this justification by faith. A σφραγίς is likewise something that attests and guarantees the authority of a claim;<sup>16</sup> it is a sign of protection and possession.<sup>17</sup> The custom of referring to circumcision as

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<sup>13</sup> Dunn, *Romans*; p.211.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Klein, *Präliminarien*, p.234 who claims that Jews of the time before the Christ event are not mentioned in Romans 4.

<sup>15</sup> Christiansen, *Justification*, p.285-287.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.209; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.88.

<sup>17</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.109.

a seal was probably well established in Judaism during Paul's time. This seal that Abraham received attested to the justification that was already his. Circumcision for Abraham thus pointed to his already received righteousness and underlined the authority of the claim that he was made righteous.

Paul is defining with these verses who is a descendant of Abraham in the Pauline sense. The real criterion of a descendant of Abraham is not circumcision, but the justification by faith. Paul is *not* clarifying if circumcision was or is of any value for the Jew, but is arguing that it is just a sign and seal of the received justification. This work of the law therefore carries no soteriological efficacy for Paul. And if Paul understands circumcision to represent all the other works of the law, all of them are soteriologically meaningless, a point which remains to be shown.<sup>18</sup> We may conclude that the Jews were always meant to be justified like Abraham by faith and that circumcision could only attest to the already attained state of being.

This interpretation of Rom.4:11-12 suggests that Paul may be presupposing this argument in Rom.2:25-29. What counts is not the outward mark of circumcision, but the inward state of being (Deut.10:16; 30:6; Jer.4:4; Ezek.36:26-27; *Jub.* 1:23). Paul attempts to provide a new meaning for the term 'Jew' by stating that the 'true' Jew is the one who is circumcised inwardly. This inward circumcision is ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμμι (Rom.2:29). This phrase has been interpreted to mean that this inward circumcision is not accomplished by the mere fulfilment of the letter of the law, the physical circumcision, but rather is the work of the Spirit (Rom.7:6; 8:4; 2.Cor.3:6).<sup>19</sup> By saying that the 'true' Jew is circumcised inwardly by the Spirit Paul is actually saying that even a Gentile can be a 'true' Jew (Rom.2:26-27) just like a physical descendant of Abraham without being physically circumcised. In this context the 'keeping of the law' of the Gentiles must mean more than the ritual and outward requirements of the law, for the uncircumcised Gentiles are still said to be capable of fulfilling the law. Fulfilling the law is later defined by Paul as 'loving one another' (Rom.13:8, cf. also James 2:8). It stands in contrast to those who have the 'written code' (γράμμι) and seemingly try to fulfil it outwardly.

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<sup>18</sup> See p.41 below.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.59f., Käsemann, *Römer*, p.71f., Dunn, *Romans*, p.123ff., Wilckens, *Römer*, p.156ff.

Some scholars (e.g. Gaston, Stowers) have taken this passage as referring only to those Jews who want to teach Gentiles the law, i.e. who are missionaries among the Gentiles, but who nevertheless break the law themselves (Rom.2:24). However, before one adopts the position that Paul is only speaking about the Jewish missionary in Rom.2:25-29, one must adopt this view for Rom.2:17-24. In any case, most scholars rather take this passage as being a general reference to any devout Jew. This being so there is no reason why Paul should move his focus from the Jew in general in Rom.2:17-24 to the Jewish missionary in Rom.2:25-29. Regarding Rom.2:19-20, the clearest reference to the Jewish missionary, Dunn states that these phrases "continue the characterization of what Paul clearly regards as typical Jewish attitudes."<sup>20</sup> Rom.2:17-24 is, therefore, addressing the Jews in general and thus Rom.2:25-29 as well.

Stowers, furthermore, misses the point when he says that the section drives "home the point that God will judge gentiles who do what the law requires (of them) on a parity with Jews who keep the law."<sup>21</sup> Paul is not using the 'keeping of the law' in the Jewish sense for the Gentiles, but rather in the sense of 'loving one another' and tries to establish that this is the real measurement for everybody. Paul is not at the moment clarifying what the real 'keeping of the law' means or how one actually can keep the law, which will be done later. Here it is more important for him to show that not just the Gentiles have missed the point (Rom.1:18-32) but also the Jews. Rom.2:25-29, therefore, fits well with our conclusion about Rom.4:11-12. In both passages Paul is rejecting the soteriological efficacy of the outward act of circumcision. In Rom.4:11-12 Paul is stating that the Jews were always meant to be justified by faith and in Rom.2:25-29 the Jews were always meant to be circumcised inwardly. It is certainly not too much to understand Paul expressing here a basic idea from two different angles. One is putting more emphasis on the human part that he ought to be justified by faith and the other is stressing rather God's part that one ought to be circumcised by the Spirit. The parallel character of the passages is reinforced by Paul retaining in both cases the confirming character of circumcision of the justification (Rom.2:25; Rom.4:12).

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<sup>20</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.111.

<sup>21</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.154.

In Rom.3:20 Paul explicitly rejects the idea of justification by 'works of the law'. Paul is likewise rejecting the soteriological efficacy of circumcision and with it possibly the soteriological efficacy of all 'works of the law' in Rom.2:28-29 and Rom.4:11-12, yet maintaining that it still was or is of some other value (Rom.3:1). The parallel character of Paul's rejection of the works of the law and circumcision as the means for justification point to the conclusion that all works of the law are soteriologically inefficient. So far we have shown this to be true for circumcision, but not for the rest of the 'works of the law'. Rom.3:20 as the peak and conclusion of the argument of Rom.2:1-3:20 is consistent with our claim. But first we will have to clarify what the 'works of the law' are. They are the deeds performed in obedience to the law. However, they are not the 'doing of the law' of Rom.2:13, the 'keeping the law' of Rom.2:27, or the 'circumcision of the heart' of Rom.2:29.<sup>22</sup> They are those deeds done in an attitude described in Rom.2:17-24. This attitude is an over-confidence in the possession of the law and a wrong understanding of the function of the works of the law.<sup>23</sup> Paul is not arguing against the law itself or even the fulfilment of the requirements of the law since he can still speak positively about it (Rom.2:25; 3:21+31), but against an attitude that understands the requirements of the law wrongly. It is the attitude that stands in opposition to the 'inward circumcision' and the 'justification by faith'. It is the understanding that the 'works of the law' carry some soteriological efficacy. Paul is just arguing against this view that the entrance into the covenant or 'staying in' is dependent on one's deeds. Stott's criticism thus actually reflects Paul's viewpoint that even not the staying in the covenant is dependent on the works of the law, but on God's grace.<sup>24</sup> One may, therefore, infer that when Paul speaks about the 'doing of the law', the 'circumcision of the heart', and the 'justification by faith', he is not only thinking of a single event of entrance in the covenant with God on the basis of justification by faith, but also about the staying in the covenant by faith.

In the past scholars have usually claimed that Paul argues against the 'works of the law' as a means to achieve righteousness in order to establish his own concept of

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<sup>22</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.158f.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Kittel, S.v. *ἐργον*, p.41ff. for the already existing rejection of the 'Werkgerechtigkeit' in the LXX.

<sup>24</sup> Stott, *Romans*, p.27.



justification by faith. However, Dunn argued that the "covenant promise and law had become too inextricably identified with ethnic Israel as such ..."<sup>25</sup> and that the works of the law have become too much a border to mark off those who are in the covenant from everyone else. He argues that Paul is attacking the view that first of all circumcision, food laws, and any other work of the law can actually secure someone's justification and keep someone in the covenant.<sup>26</sup> Dunn thus tries to unite Sanders' view with the traditional interpretation. But by stating that the Jews tried to stay in their covenant with God by doing the works of the law, the argument has only moved from 'to try *to be justified* by the works of the law' to 'to try *to stay in the justification* by the works of the law'. In both cases the works of the law would carry soteriological efficacy in the Jewish mind. The first view, the traditional view, would argue that the Jews were not justified by their works of the law. Dunn, on the other hand, argues that the Jews were justified by the grace of God and the works of the law were wrongly understood to maintain the justification and regarded as a border that marks them off and makes them special so that they can boast. This "Jewish assumption of a special covenant prerogative which assures a verdict of acquittal at the day of judgement is a living on the level of the flesh."<sup>27</sup> This attitude allows no confidence at the day of judgement since their understanding of the law actually transgresses the law (Rom.2:27). This eschatological outlook makes the traditional view and Dunn's view very similar; the Jewish attempt either to be justified by their works of the law or to remain within the covenant is not of any value on the day of judgement. Furthermore, Dunn is mainly restricting the works of the law in the context of Rom.3:20 to

those actions which were performed at the behest of the law, in service of the Torah; that is, those actions which marked out those involved as the people of the law, those acts prescribed by the law by which a member of the covenant people identified himself as a Jew and maintained his status within the covenant.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.lxxi.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.158f.

<sup>27</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.159.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.158.

These acts are for Dunn mainly circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observation. This restriction of the sense of 'works of the law' has been criticised, since the generic sense of 'law' in Paul's argument since Rom.2:12 contradicts this limited view.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the Qumran Literature (e.g. 4QMMT) used 'deeds of the law' for all things required by the Mosaic law, so that this was most likely a contemporary expression picked up by Paul with the same sense.<sup>30</sup> We conclude that Paul used the phrase 'works of the law' not in a restricted sense, but in the full sense of those deeds prescribed or required by the law.

However, Dunn's view that the Jews did not try to earn justification by their deeds but to maintain their justification and to mark themselves off as the people of God is certainly doing more justice to the Jewish mind of Paul's days than the traditional view, which claimed that the Jews were legalistic. We will, therefore, adopt his view that Paul is arguing against the wrong understanding of the role of all the works of the law as something to maintain the justification and to mark themselves off from the non-elect, the Gentiles. Paul is, therefore, not just rejecting the soteriological efficacy of circumcision alone, but of all the works of the law, whereby circumcision as *the* work of the law can usually be understood to be a representative of all works of the law.

Before we close the discussion about the ἔργα νόμου, we will briefly have to look at Gaston's view that this phrase is supposed to be a 'subjective genitive'.<sup>31</sup> This means for him that the 'works of the law' was never a Jewish phrase, but was used to denote the adoption of some Jewish laws or practices on the part of Gentiles. Some Judaizers tried to convince Gentiles to keep some to the requirements of the law. But which law does a Gentile have to observe to be justified? Paul is supposed to argue with Rom.3:20 that no work of the law is able to do so. This reading fits well into the view of the two-covenant hermeneutical approach. However, Fitzmyer notes that the Qumran Literature (e.g. 4QMMT) contains the Hebrew equivalent of ἔργα νόμου and used it as the traditional view usually understands it.<sup>32</sup> If this is correct, Gaston's

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<sup>29</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.338; Stott, *Romans*, p.31.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.338f. for the use of 'deeds of the law' in the Qumran Literature.

<sup>31</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.100-106.

<sup>32</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.338f.

proposition that it was never a Jewish phrase is incorrect. The consequence is that Paul was addressing in Rom.3:20 the Jews and possibly the Gentiles with regard to their attitude(s) towards the works of the law. The traditional reading as discussed above seems thus to be the more consistent and plain reading of the ἔργα νόμου.

So far we have argued that Paul's concept of justification by faith was present before the Christ event. Moreover, circumcision and the works of the law in general carry no soteriological efficacy for the Jew, because all along the Jews were meant to be justified by faith. However, thus far we have only discussed the *works* of the law in relation to faith, but not the law itself. To clarify this will be our next concern in the following section.

### The Purpose of the Law

F.F. Bruce summarises the purpose of the law under four basic headings, which correspond to general scholarly consensus.<sup>33</sup> Firstly, it was given to reveal God and his will. Secondly, for the preservation and health of the human race. Thirdly, it was given to reveal sin and to lead humanity to cast themselves on the pardoning grace of God. Finally, it was meant to provide guidance for the believer's life. These general purposes we will have to discuss in more detail.

The first statement that one purpose was to reveal God and his will can be seen to find its support in Rom.3:2 for the Jews ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ. Λόγια – 'oracles' has been interpreted as the promises and the law,<sup>34</sup> the Old Testament as a whole,<sup>35</sup> and the utterances of God through Moses and the prophets.<sup>36</sup> It is hard to be specific in this matter, but we might simply say that at least the law as it was given through Moses is included in this term. This interpretation is supported by the use of λόγια in the LXX (e.g. Deut.33:9; Isa.5:24). The Jews have received the law and thus the self-revelation of God in the law for a purpose that remains unnamed by Paul. However, it is generally agreed that they received the law to attest

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<sup>33</sup> Bruce, *Romans*, p.53ff.

<sup>34</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.78; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.100.

<sup>35</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.326; Stott, *Romans*, p.96; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.164; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.74.

<sup>36</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.130f.

it and to declare it to all humankind.<sup>37</sup> The use of 'oracles' instead of 'law' seems to show that Paul is thinking of those 'laws' that have universal significance. These 'oracles' thus give the Jew an advantage, but also a responsibility towards the Gentiles (cf. Deut.4:7-8; Amos 3:2). In Rom.9:4-5 Paul is more explicit concerning what the advantage of the possession of the law means for him, but we will limit our discussion to those passages that are within our text of interest, Romans 1-4. The role of the law was thus to reveal God and his will to the Jews *and* to the Gentiles through the Jews.

The third purpose of the law stated by Bruce is that it was given to reveal sin and to lead human beings to rely on the pardoning grace of God. Through the law God's will and the human being's position before God is revealed: διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας (Rom.3:20b) and ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὀργὴν κατεργάζεται (Rom.4:15a). The law was for the Jew the means and measure of life within the Jewish covenant (cf. Sir.45:5; *Pss. Sol.*14.2). However, Paul argues here that the law was not to secure life, but to reveal sin so that even the Jews have to realise that they are in need of the grace of God. Romans 3:20b, therefore, is the proof of Rom.3:20a where Paul states what the role of the law is when no one will be justified by his deeds. The law makes one aware or conscious of sin. It has been said that ἐπίγνωσις means that we experience or provoke sin through the law, that we are led into sinning.<sup>38</sup> However, the more simple and less pregnant reading that the law makes 'just' conscious of sin has been argued for by other scholars.<sup>39</sup> This seems to be the more appropriate position since the context does not support the other understanding of ἐπίγνωσις. Furthermore, such a reading would lead the reader away from Paul's argument that all, Jews as well as Gentiles, are sinners, that the works of the law have no soteriological efficacy, and that the law is not meant to justify but to reveal the human condition before God.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.105; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.61; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.74f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.326; Dunn, *Romans*, p.138f.

<sup>38</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.114; Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.262f.

<sup>39</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.67; Dunn, *Romans*, p.155f.; Zeller, *Römer*, p.81; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.339.

<sup>40</sup> Paul discusses this function of the law further in Rom.7:7-25, but again this is beyond the scope of this paper and therefore we will not discuss it here. Yet, it may be noted that Paul seemingly draws on the Adam story to show that the law was used

It remains to discuss Stowers' view that Paul did not formulate Rom.3:20b in relation to the Jews since Paul would have known better. Paul is stating that "the law only informs gentiles about their degenerate state."<sup>41</sup> In reply we may refer back to our discussion of Rom.3:20a. There we said that the phrase 'works of the law' was a common phrase used by contemporary Jews in Paul's days. He is, therefore, not just addressing Gentiles with Rom.3:20a. If he is speaking about Jews and Gentiles there, he is certainly not speaking just about the Gentiles in Rom.3:20b. The γάρ between Rom.3:20a and 3:20b that ties the two parts together indicates this flow of thought. Paul was thus stating that 'through the law comes the knowledge of sin' for both, Jew and Gentile.<sup>42</sup>

Together with Rom.3:20b we will have to discuss Rom.4:15a. This phrase is certainly very similar to Rom.3:20b and scholars usually interpret them alike. It is again necessary to explain what the role of the law is if the law does not make its followers 'heirs'<sup>43</sup> (Rom.4:14). The second part of Rom.4:15 (οὐ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος οὐδὲ παράβασις) is explaining the first part (ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὁργὴν κατεργάζεται) in negative form; if there is no law, there is no transgression. The assumption is that if there is a law there is transgression and this transgression produces wrath. Scholars state that Paul was possibly having some general legal maxim in mind (*nulla poena sine lege*).<sup>44</sup> Paul, however, was certainly referring to the Torah and not to some other 'law'. The law did not work justification nor was it

by sin (in Adam's case by the serpent) to create covetousness (Rom.7:7-8). The law thus brought about the awareness of the possibility of sin and sin itself.

<sup>41</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.190.

<sup>42</sup> Gaston's position is that Romans 1:18-3:20 is an indictment of the Gentile world rather than of both, Jew and Gentile (*Torah*, p.122). The Jews are not at focus, rather Paul wants to argue that what is true of Israel is *now also* for Gentiles. However, after our discussion of faith and the works of the law in relation to the Jews before the Christ event, we may agree with Gaston that Paul is arguing for the inclusion of the Gentiles but this is not his main concern. He is rather concerned to establish his concept of justification by faith and on which basis both, Jew and Gentile alike, can be justified. In this context Paul has to define the role of the law for Jew and Gentile. Cf. Stuckenbruck, *Theology*, p.137f.

<sup>43</sup> The κληρονόμος was for the Jew the circumcised (Rom.4:9-12) and the (physical) seed of Abraham (Rom.4:13:17), thus Israel. Paul, however, argues that the justified by faith are heirs (Rom.4:16). They are those to whom the promise of the inheritance of the world is given (Rom.4:13).

<sup>44</sup> E.g. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.143, Dunn, *Romans*, p.214f.

able to maintain one's covenant status. It rather excluded from the promise and covenant because of the transgression of the law. The law makes one aware of this transgression (Rom.3:20) and also of its consequence, i.e. that one is under wrath (Rom.1:18) and thus liable to the final judgement. In this sense Rom.3:20b and Rom.4:15 are very similar for in both cases the function of the law is to reveal the sinfulness of human beings and their need for God's grace.

Scholars like Gaston and Stowers obviously cannot agree with such an interpretation. They explain Rom.4:15 as again referring to the Gentiles since the law contains only condemnation for them. For such a claim Rom.4:14 has to be translated as "If *only* those whose status springs from the law are heirs, Abraham's faithfulness has been made useless and God's promise unkept."<sup>45</sup> However, the problem with such a translation is that there is no 'only' in Rom.4:14. Their translation clearly changes the sense of the verse, for it is not stating that the Gentiles can be heirs *next to* the adherents of the law; Paul rejects *wholly* the idea that the adherents of the law *only* are heirs. Paul supports his claim with Rom.4:15 as the γόφ indicates. Rom.4:15 therefore cannot refer only to the Gentiles because Paul is clearly addressing the Jews with Rom.4:14 and proving his claim and explaining the role of the law with Rom.4:15.

We may conclude that for Paul the law was indeed given, as Bruce stated, to reveal sin and to make the human beings understand their need of God's grace. The law reveals sin (Rom.3:20), i.e. the committed transgression of the law (Rom.4:15). And it is the law by which humans are made aware of the possibility of its transgression. Where the law is, there is its transgression and this transgression brings wrath (Rom.4:15, cf. Rom.7:7-15). The direct result of the law is thus wrath. The law, sin, and wrath are, therefore, three elements that necessarily belong together. However, the function of the law was not to work sin and wrath, but to reveal their presence and thus to make the human beings aware of their need of God's grace.

The two remaining purposes of the law as stated by Bruce that it was meant to provide guidance for the believer's life and was given for the preservation of the human race are logical consequences of the two just discussed. In our discussion of

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<sup>45</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.246; Gaston, *Torah*, p.123.

the historical context<sup>46</sup> we have argued that Romans 1-4 provides the theological basis on which Paul can establish further what it means to live a life justified by faith, the ethical part of the letter. We have already cited one example, i.e. that the believer ought to 'love one another' (Rom.13:8). However, a discussion of these two purposes would certainly go beyond the scope of this thesis.

Thus far we have tried to limit our discussion to the time before the Christ event and the Jews. We have argued that the Jews were meant to be justified by faith and that the law and the works of the law have no soteriological efficacy. The law was meant to reveal God and consequently the sinfulness of the Jews and their need of God's grace. Whereby the term 'works of the law' refers to the wrong attitude towards the requirements of the law that if they are kept one will be (or remains) justified. However, before we can move on to discuss passages like μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν (Rom.3:21), which are concerned with the role of the law after the Christ event, we will have to discuss the role of the law and its works in relation to faith for the Gentiles before the Christ event.

#### The Gentiles and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event

For our discussion of the Gentiles before the Christ event we will have to discuss especially Rom.2:7-10, 12-16, Rom.2:26-27; and Rom.3:20. However, first we will have to clarify whether the concept of justification by faith was available for the Gentiles before the Christ event as it was for the Jews. It is important to note here that Paul's primary concern is to argue for justification *apart from the law* (Rom.3:21). This is of importance for Paul since if one was justified by the law, the Gentiles had no access to the justification except by the law (Rom.4:14), they would have to become proselytes! This is usually taken as an argument of Paul that applies only to the time after the Christ event,<sup>47</sup> but others would say that Paul's argument is valid also for the time before the Christ event.<sup>48</sup> Two reasons might be taken to argue that Gentiles could be justified by faith. The first is Paul's midrash in Romans 4 where he argues that Abraham was uncircumcised and without the law when he was

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<sup>46</sup> See 'The historical and textual Context of Romans 1-4' p.21-33 above.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.118f.; Zeller, *Römer*, p.83; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.86f.; Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.167.

justified. He was thus a Gentile like those of Rom.1:18-3:20 before his justification. We will discuss this argument in detail later,<sup>49</sup> but because of its importance it is necessary to mention it here.

The second reason is a general one. If our claim is correct that the Jews were meant to be justified before the Christ event, which most contemporary scholars confirm, then all the general arguments used by Paul for the inclusion of the Gentiles are possibly applicable to the time before Christ as well. A primary example is Rom.3:27-31 where Paul argues that since God justifies apart from works of the law, Jew and Gentile can be justified by faith. This is true since God is one, for the one God of the Jews and Gentiles certainly justifies all alike by faith. If we try to apply this general argument to the time before Christ we find that it carries the same weight and is very convincing. The Jews before the Christ event could be justified apart from the works of the law. Therefore, since the justification was not dependent on the works of the law, the Gentiles were able to be justified as well. Again, this is supported by the Shema of the Old Testament (Deut.6:4; Rom.3:30), the monotheistic declaration, which was true before as well as after the Christ event and undeniable by any Jew. If, therefore, the argument is valid even before the Christ event, the concept of justification by faith was available for the Gentiles before the Christ event.

The objection to this argument could be that Paul introduces with Rom.3:21 the new aeon of which verses 27-31 are a description,<sup>50</sup> so that an application of the argument for the old aeon would take the text out of context. The question one has to answer, however, is what Paul is actually arguing with respect to the Gentiles. He is certainly advocating the inclusion of the Gentiles and links the justification of the Gentiles after the Christ event with Christology. Furthermore, it is true that this text build directly on Rom.3:21f. and the introduced righteousness. However, what is Paul introducing with Rom.3:21 and what precisely is being argued? We will come to this question later,<sup>51</sup> but it might be stated briefly that Paul is not introducing a

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<sup>48</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.284; Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.121; Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.142.

<sup>49</sup> See 'A Classification of Abraham' p.97 below.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. e.g. Zeller, *Römer*, p.92f.; Michel, *Römer*, p.95f.

<sup>51</sup> See 'The Law and Faith after the Christ Event' p.58-64 below.



new concept of justification by faith. There are three options what is introduced and revealed. First, it is revealed that even Gentiles can be justified by faith. Secondly, the righteousness of God through the Christ event is revealed. And the final option is that both, the inclusion of the Gentiles and God's righteousness, are revealed. We will take the position that Paul is solely concerned with the revealed righteousness of God and not with the fact that now even the Gentiles can be justified. If one adopts this position, the passage of Rom.3:27-31 is no longer an argument only applicable to the time after the Christ event, but is a description of what was true before and after Christ, namely that at all times all were meant to be justified by faith.<sup>52</sup>

The two phrases νόμος τῶν ἔργων and νόμος πίστεως of Rom.3:27 confirm our suggestion. Paul is clearly playing on words here to illustrate further how the law ought to be understood. He parallels νόμος τῶν ἔργων with νόμος πίστεως to show the difference. It is generally agreed that with νόμος τῶν ἔργων Paul is referring back to the 'works of the law' and the wrong concept that stands behind it. However, the νόμος πίστεως has caused some problems of interpretation. Some scholars understand it as referring to the Torah,<sup>53</sup> others as 'ethical norm', 'principle', or 'system'.<sup>54</sup> If one reflects on what Paul was arguing against, a wrong understanding of the Torah, νόμος πίστεως should be taken as the view of the law that Paul wants to establish. It is by faith that the law is fulfilled and the law requires faith if it is not to produce sin and wrath. The law seen in the light of faith is what Paul has in mind and what he tries to establish.<sup>55</sup> This interpretation would certainly make most sense

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<sup>52</sup> The distinction drawn between ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ τῆς πίστεως must be mentioned briefly. Stowers (also Gaston, Zahn) tries to demonstrate that "the phrase *dia tes pisteos* refers very specifically to Jesus' 'atoning' death for the redemption of the gentiles ..."(Rereading, p.241) 'Εκ πίστεως on the other hand "focuses on *pistis* ('faithfulness,' 'trust') as Abraham's and Christ's generative activity."(Rereading, p.240) The phrase ἐκ πίστεως speaks for Stowers about descent and "creates a discourse for depicting a new kinship for gentiles that relates them to Jews."(Rereading, p.239) However, most scholars (e.g. Schlier, Kuss, Cranfield, Dunn, Fitzmyer) agree that Paul uses the distinction for rhetorical reasons (cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.189f., Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.365f. for a detailed discussion).

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.186; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.245f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.363; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.78-79.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.129; Zeller, *Römer*, p.92f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.96f.

<sup>55</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.62.

of Rom.3:31, for then the law is indeed not annulled but confirmed.<sup>56</sup> If this interpretation is correct, Paul is arguing for more than some salvation historical continuity. He has tried to show what is wrong with the Jewish concept of 'works of the law' and the Jewish position that only the Jews are the 'elect'. He argued that the Jews were always meant to be justified by faith, to fulfil the law by faith. If this was possible for the Jews, Paul could well have had the same line of thought in mind for the Gentiles (Rom.2:7-10, 13-16; Rom.2:26-27).

We will discuss these passages (Rom.2:7-10, 13-16; Rom.2:26-27) and thus the relation of the law to faith for Gentiles before the Christ event in a moment, but first we shall consider another general argument that confirms our claim that even the Gentiles were meant to be justified by faith before the Christ event. In Rom.4:13-14 Paul rejects the soteriological efficacy of the law for it produces wrath and violation of the law. On the basis of this argument he states that διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως (Rom.4:16) so that the promise may be for Jews and Gentiles. Paul thus argues not only for the inclusion of the Gentiles, but also for the fact that the justification is accessible for all since it is dependent on faith (Rom.4:13). He is not stating that it was ever dependent on the law, but always on faith, so that the Gentiles might not be excluded. The Jews were justified by faith before the Christ event and since it was dependent on faith there, it was not restricted just to them there either. There is no reason why this argument should be restricted to the time after the Christ event. Paul's language nowhere seems to suggest that he is only thinking of the time after the Christ event, but about the principle of justification by faith in general. Rom.4:11 is a good example of this. Why does Paul not add here or anywhere else something that would indicate that he is restricting this to a certain time. The statement that 'the purpose was to make him ancestor of *all* who believe without being circumcised ...' (Rom.4:11b) rather suggests that Paul was intentionally speaking in general terms. It is going beyond the Christ event.

We conclude that Paul's use of Abraham, a 'Gentile' before the Christ event, and the general arguments for the justification by faith for Gentiles not restricted to the time after Christ make it reasonable to infer that also the Gentiles were meant to

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.186f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.245f. for some more reasons in support of this view.

be justified by faith before the Christ event. Because of these reasons we will take the position that the concept of justification was not just available for the Jew but also for the Gentiles before the Christ event.

### The Gentiles, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith

We have suggested earlier that the Gentiles like the Jews were asked to fulfil the law by faith before the Christ event.<sup>57</sup> Whether this view is correct and applicable to Rom.2:7-10, 12-16, Rom.2:26-27; and Rom.3:20 will be discussed now. With this discussion we will be able to clarify the relation of the law to faith before the Christ event for the Gentiles.

First, we will look at Rom.2:7-8 and Rom.2:9-10, whereby the latter basically repeats the statement of the first. Having shown the sinfulness of the Gentiles and having not yet openly addressed the wrong attitude of the Jews, Paul describes two kinds of 'works' and their effects. The first work (Rom.2:7+10) is a continually doing good, a lifelong striving that will result in glory, honour, peace, and immortality. The other work (Rom.2:8-9) is a self-seeking. It is a disobeying the truth, a doing of evil that will be repaid with wrath and fury, anguish and distress. The 'truth' (ἀλήθεια) should not be taken to mean the Gospel here, since Paul has not yet precisely defined it.<sup>58</sup> It should rather be understood as the 'truth' of Rom.1:18, that God is the creator, redeemer, and judge.<sup>59</sup> For these verses (Rom.2:7-11) Cranfield lists five possible interpretations:<sup>60</sup>

1. Paul is inconsistent. Once Paul speaks of justification apart from works and here it is said that the doer of good will receive eternal life.
2. He speaks hypothetically. Paul leaves the Gospel out of account to show that even on the basis of the Jewish presuppositions the present conduct brings disaster.
3. He means with 'work' in Rom.2:6 faith or disbelief so that he is speaking of Christians in Rom.2:7+10, whereby the good work is faith.

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<sup>57</sup> See our discussion of νόμου πίστεως p.50-51 above.

<sup>58</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.87.

<sup>59</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.30.

<sup>60</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.46-48.

4. He is referring to Christians in Rom.2:7+10, but the good work is not faith itself but their conduct as the expression of their faith.
5. Paul reckons with the existence among the Gentiles of a faith that is known only to God and refers to it in Rom.2:7+10.

Cranfield rejects the first as too improbable and the second since there is no indication in the text that Paul is speaking hypothetically. Without discussing option three and five further he chooses the fourth as the best solution. Zeller on the other hand argues that the situation before the Christ event was different to the new. "Das Kriterium des Tuns bleibt auch für den Christen maßgebend, aber seine geschichtliche Situation vor dem Gericht Gottes ist eine andere als die des »Menschen« von Kap.2."<sup>61</sup> Paul is thus said to be able to speak about the 'doing of good' as the measurement for the people of the time before Christ. However, it has hopefully become clear by now that there is a salvation historical continuity, so that there is no difference between the Christian of the time after and the *Menschen* of the time before the Christ event. We have thus to look for an other explanation for these verses.

It is certainly true that Paul is interested in arguing that to be a Jew is no privilege at the final judgement, but to claim that this is all Paul tries to argue and that the rest has to be ignored seems to miss the point.<sup>62</sup> Cranfield's view seems to be very reasonable, but from our previous considerations it makes sense to offer a view that is a mixture of the fourth and fifth view. What he calls a 'faith known only to God' among the Gentiles sounds somewhat unreasonable and misplaced so that one wants to reject the fifth option. However, if it is true that the Gentiles like the Jews were able to be justified by faith and fulfil the law by their faith, Paul necessarily must not speak about Christians (Jewish or Gentile Christians) only, but of all who are justified by faith, Jews and Gentiles. He is not stating anything about this concept of justification by faith here. However, from our previous considerations, we can infer that the doer of the law is the one who 'loves another', who by the Spirit is inwardly circumcised, the justified by faith. That Paul is not simply thinking of Christians here is supported just by the fact that the Christian idea is not really

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<sup>61</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.68.

<sup>62</sup> So Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.87.

introduced till Rom.3:21. Furthermore, that Paul is obviously thinking not only of those Jews of the time before Christ who are justified by faith and thus fulfil the law and do good, but also of the Gentiles who do so is undeniably stated with Rom.2:7+10-11. If this argumentation is correct, it would not only support the view that the law was meant to be fulfilled by faith rather than its works, but it would be a further argument that the Gentiles before the Christ event were also meant to be justified by faith.

The next passage, Rom.2:12-16, follows directly Paul's argument that all will be judged and that only those who do good in the proper sense will receive eternal life. Paul refers here for the first time to the νόμος, which is surely the Torah. He continues to show that the possession of the law is no advantage at the eschatological judgement and the γάρ of Rom.2:13 indicates that he is going to explain himself further.

He states that οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται. Paul draws a distinction here between 'hearing' and 'doing' that was alien to the Jewish mind for whom both belonged necessarily together (e.g. Deut.4:30; 30:12-13; Jer.11:3). The distinction between the two implies that Paul is not speaking about the doing of the requirements of the law as an outward deed, but about the same form of 'doing the law' as in Rom.2:7+10. Paul with the distinction between 'hearing' and 'doing' is thus emphasising the idea of what the proper doing of the law is and that it will be the measurement at the final judgement. He is certainly not saying that there are some who fulfil the law and thus earn God's justification. This would indeed be a contradiction to Rom.3:20.

The next three verses (Rom.2:14-16) that build again on the previous text as indicated by the γάρ have been used to argue for some form of 'natural theology'. However, the 'law' is generally understood to mean the Torah,<sup>63</sup> so that Paul is saying here that Gentiles by nature do the things of the Torah. Cranfield lists here basically the same possible interpretations as above.<sup>64</sup> He uses the same arguments and comes again to the conclusion that Paul is speaking about Gentile Christians.

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<sup>63</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.105; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.50f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.133; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.58; Stowers, *Rereading*, p.138; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.41.

<sup>64</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.50.

Cranfield's interpretation that Paul is speaking about Gentile Christians is to be rejected on the basis of syntactical reasons<sup>65</sup> and since Paul is comparing Jews and Gentiles in Romans 1-2 and not Jews and Gentile Christians.<sup>66</sup> Another interpretation has thus to be found. We note first that even if Paul was speaking about the Gentiles in general (not Gentile Christians), he limits his statement by the omission of the article before ἔθνη so that it speaks only about some Gentiles. However, what does Paul mean with their doing of τὰ τοῦ νόμου? Paul is not speaking negatively about what the Gentiles do, i.e. sinning, as Gaston claims.<sup>67</sup> Paul intends to show that some Gentiles occasionally do some of the requirements of the law but not always all.<sup>68</sup> This view in opposition to Gaston's is clearly supported by Rom.2:15, for they show that they are aware of the requirements of the law not by transgressing it, but by doing it. A transgression of the law does not allow one to argue for an awareness of the law for one can transgress it by ignorance. The Gentiles here therefore sometimes do some 'things of the law'. And since they do only *sometimes some* things of the law we can infer that the text is not speaking about the same 'doing good' (Rom.2:7+10) or being a 'doer of the law' (Rom.2:13). Paul is rather building up an argument that the proper standard of the law is known to the Gentiles and that they are judged according to it.<sup>69</sup> This is indicated by the singular of the ἔργον τοῦ νόμου (Rom.2:15, cf. Rom.8:4). Paul is deliberately not having 'works (plural) of the law' with its negative connotation, but the singular to show that even the Gentiles are aware of the proper understanding of the law even though they do it just sometimes.<sup>70</sup> Käsemann and Fitzmyer claim that the 'work of the law' is the concrete act demanded by the law, for otherwise "kommt man zu einem Nomos, wie die Juden ihn für die Patriarchen behaupten und nach Pls nur die Christen ihn erfüllen."<sup>71</sup> However, we have just argued that the Gentiles, like the Jews, are able to fulfil the law like the Christians after the Christ event. The 'work of the law' may thus very well be the law as it was meant to be understood. Jew and Gentile are thus both

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.98.

<sup>66</sup> Eichholz, *Theologie*, p.94-96.

<sup>67</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.105f.

<sup>68</sup> So Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.309; Dunn, *Romans*, p.98.

<sup>69</sup> Harnisch, *Toleranz*, p.68.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.100; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.134ff.

responsible and liable to judgement if they are not 'doers of the law'. This text is thus not referring to Gentiles who actually fulfil the law by faith, but rather Paul argues that the Gentiles too are aware of the law as it was meant to be seen even though they do not have the Torah in written form.

The next passage we briefly want to return to is Rom.2:26-27. We had a glance at it in our discussion of whether the Jews were always meant to be justified by faith. There we said that even a Gentile can be a 'true' Jew and 'keep the law' without being outwardly circumcised. However, most scholars would take this passage to be picking up of the theme of Rom.2:14,<sup>72</sup> so that Paul is not speaking about Gentile Christians here, but still tries to argue for the sinfulness of the Jews and to show what it means to be a true Jew. It is said that the view that Paul is referring to Gentile Christians here as argued for by Cranfield and Dunn<sup>73</sup> is to be rejected since it would contradict the flow of thought of the text of Rom.1:18-3:20, which is solely concerned to speak about the wrath of God. Furthermore, the contrast drawn by Paul between Jew and Gentile would be lost and it is unlikely that Paul would speak of Christians as being circumcised. In response to these arguments, it may be said that Paul is using a language here that he uses elsewhere only for those who are justified by faith (e.g. Rom.7:6; 8:4; 13:8). In addition, the contrast between Jew and Gentile is not lost if Paul is not only thinking of Gentile Christians here, but also about Gentiles who were justified by faith before the Christ event. The difference with Rom.2:14 would then be that Paul is arguing there that some Gentiles only did some of the requirements of the law since their conscience drives them to do so, whereby the Gentiles in Rom.2:26-27 indeed fulfil the law and this like the Jews by faith. In this sense Paul is establishing a perspective of what it means to be a Jew, someone who is part of the covenant with God. It is an inward matter and can only be accomplished by the concept he is building up to but has not mentioned yet, justification by faith.

It remains to look at Paul's conclusion of his argument of Rom.1:18-3:20 in Rom.3:19-20. We have maintained Paul charges the Gentiles like the Jews that they

<sup>71</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.60; cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.311.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.101f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.322; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.68ff.

<sup>73</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.58; Dunn, *Romans*, p.121ff.

were aware of the proper understanding of the requirements of the law. The Gentiles prove this to be true by doing some of the requirements of the law (Rom.2:14) and the Jews since they know that they were not just meant to do them outwardly and to be mere listeners of the law (Rom.2:13; Rom.2:28-29). Before Paul comes to his conclusion in Rom.3:19-20, he has 'all' in view: everyone (πάντας) are under sin (Rom.3:9) and the following catena of ten Old Testament passages confirms his claim (Rom.3:10-18). Paul then states that 'whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law' (Rom.3:19). This is usually said to apply to the Jews, so that if the Jews who have the law and consider themselves as an exception are condemned, certainly all humankind is condemned.<sup>74</sup> However, after Paul's argumentation in the preceding section it could be argued that Paul has also shown that the Gentiles are 'under the law' (cf. especially Rom.2:14-15) by their being aware of the true and proper requirements of the law (cf. Rom.2:7-10, 26-27) so that the universal language following that 'every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God' would not be a surprise. This is confirmed by the universal language kept in Rom.3:20, for not only the Jews cannot be justified by the 'works of the law', but neither can the Gentiles. However, even if the usual reading is correct the statement that the Gentiles cannot be justified by the 'works of the law' is still valid. This only makes sense if the Gentiles were aware of the proper understanding of the law and like the Jews tried to be justified by 'works of the law'. For the Gentile 'works of the law' cannot have the same meaning in full as for the Jews that they are the deeds prescribed or required by the law, for the ritual laws are certainly unknown to the Gentile. However, the basic definition of the 'works of the law' is certainly correct also for the Gentile. If the Gentile tries to keep what is known to him of the requirements of the law to be or stay justified, he is missing the point like the Jews. Therefore, the Gentile also was to be justified by faith and by his faith fulfil the law (Rom.2:7+10, 26-27).

Before we conclude this section we will have to ask why the Gentiles before the Christ event did not have to be circumcised or keep the law. We will not be able to provide a full answer here, but from what we have seen so far it may be said that

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<sup>74</sup> E.g. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.67; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.336f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.112; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.173.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.157f.



the law was given as a sign and seal to the Jews to confirm the covenant made with God and his revelation of himself in the law (Rom.4:11-13). The Gentiles did not have the written law, so that they simply were not able to know of the circumcision or the ritual laws. They were not asked to do them but to live by faith and thus to fulfil the law (Rom.8:4).

In summary we may say that Jew and Gentile before the Christ event were to be justified by the present justification by faith. It was not restricted to the time after the Christ event or only accessible to the Jews. The concept of justification by faith was for Paul always universal. The role of the law and of the 'works of the law' have thus not been to justify or to keep justified, for the law and its works carry no soteriological efficacy. According to Romans 1-4 the law was rather meant to reveal God and his will, and to reveal the sin of humanity and thus make people aware of the need for God's grace. The 'works of the law', on the other hand, are an expression for the false concept that one can be or stay justified by the doing of some outward deeds of the law. This includes for the Jew circumcision as *the* work of the law, which was in fact only given as a sign and seal of the received righteousness. This notion of the 'works of the law' was not only known by the Jews, for the Gentiles like the Jews are able to distinguish between the proper and the false understanding of the law. The proper view of the law as it was meant to be according to Paul makes the human being aware of his need for God's grace with the result that he or she may be justified by faith and be circumcised inwardly by the Spirit (Rom.2:28-29). This justification enables one to 'do good' (Rom.2:7+10), to 'keep the law' (Rom.2:26-27), so that by it the law is fulfilled.

### ***The Law and Faith after the Christ Event***

We will begin our discussion with a closer look at Rom.3:21 and its different interpretations. It states that *νοὺν δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται*. This has been interpreted to mean that (1) a new kind of God's righteousness has been revealed, or that (2) God's righteousness has been revealed in the fact that now even the Gentiles can be justified.<sup>75</sup> A further option is to argue that (3) the hidden

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<sup>75</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.122f.

righteousness of God has now been revealed through the Christ event.<sup>76</sup> In addition, one could support a combination of the first<sup>77</sup> or the latter two.<sup>78</sup> Our concern at the moment is not to clarify how the Christology is related to the concept of faith or the righteousness of God,<sup>79</sup> but to discuss the effect of the revealed righteousness on the relation of law and faith.

We have argued that for Paul the concept of justification by faith was available before Christ for both, Jew and Gentile. If this argument is correct, Paul is then not introducing with Rom.3:21 that even the Gentiles can now be justified, for this has always been possible. Furthermore, since the concept of justification by faith is not new, God's righteousness<sup>80</sup> is not a new sort of righteousness, but one that is being revealed in the Christ event. It existed before Christ (though hidden), but has been revealed with him. The relationship of the Christ event in regard to the revealed righteousness will be discussed later, but we note for now that the temporal force of the *νοὐν δέ* indicates that with Christ a new situation, a new epoch, age, or aeon has begun. In this new aeon the justification is possible *χωρὶς νόμου*. Does this mean that the righteousness is given "outside the national and religious parameters set by the law ..."<sup>81</sup> or that *χωρὶς νόμου* carries the sense of being apart from the covenant, i.e. apart from the Jewish people, so that Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles?<sup>82</sup> Or does *χωρὶς νόμου* mean the annulment of the law to the point that its only remaining function is as a witness to the revealed righteousness?<sup>83</sup>

Wilckens argues for the last position, claiming that "*χωρὶς* bedeutet bei Paulus das Fehlen bzw. die Ausschaltung einer bestimmten Wirkung; vgl. von Personen 10,14; 1Kor 4,8 vg. Phlm 14; auch 1Kor11,11, vom Gesetz 3,28; 4,6; 7,8.9."<sup>84</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.185.

<sup>77</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.118f., Stowers, *Rereading*, p.195f.

<sup>78</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.87, Dunn, *Romans*, p.165.

<sup>79</sup> See 'Christology' p.64-83 below.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Käsemann, *Exegetische*, p.181-193 for a discussion of the *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* and its use as a subjective or objective genitive.

<sup>81</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.165; cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.70.

<sup>82</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.122; Stowers, *Rereading*, p.197f., p.223f.

<sup>83</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.87f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.119; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.185f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.344.

<sup>84</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.185.

function of the law as described by Rom.3:20 is ruled out by the new righteousness.<sup>85</sup> The new righteousness annuls the condemnation of the law so that the curse is lifted. Having lost its condemning function, the law can now attest to God's righteousness. For Schmithals and Käsemann the function of the law is not only annulled but also the law itself.<sup>86</sup> Dunn and Cranfield hold a different position. For them χωρὶς νόμου is a synonym of χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου (Rom.3:28) and χωρὶς ἔργων (Rom.4:6); as such, it stands in contrast to ἐν τῷ νόμῳ and ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Rom.3:19-20).<sup>87</sup> The revelation of the righteousness of God, however, does not mean the annulment of the law. For Dunn it rather means that the righteousness has been revealed independently of national and religious borders set by the law, independently of the wrong concept of 'works of the law'. And for Cranfield it means that it is apart from what people do with regard to the law, it is not earned by one's deeds.

In strong contrast to these positions stands the view of Stowers and Gaston. They claim that in Rom.3:21 Paul refers to the righteousness of God which has been revealed in the fact that the Gentiles can now be justified apart from the law, whereby the Jews are still justified by the law. Gaston does not give any reasons for his position; he simply insists that "Romans 3:21-31 is clearly about the inclusion of the Gentiles ..."<sup>88</sup> Stowers, however, argues that there is flow of thought from Rom.3:1-20 to Rom.3:21-26 that unites the two rather than creating a break between the old aeon (Rom.3:1-20) and the new (Rom.3:21-26). Rom.3:3-5 calls God's faithfulness and righteousness into question, Rom.3:9-20 accuses humanity of unrighteousness, and Rom.3:21-26 shows the righteousness of God overcomes human unrighteousness. Since according to Stowers Rom.3:1-20 is *not* about humanity in general, Paul argues in Rom.3:21 that God is to be righteous by providing a just and merciful deliverance *for the Gentiles*. Χωρὶς νόμου is thus restricted to the Gentiles only so that the law is invalid for them but still valid for the Jews.

We will, first, discuss the position of Stowers and Gaston. Stowers stresses the unity of Romans 3, but his argumentation is only valid if not all Jews are addressed

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<sup>85</sup> So also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.344.

<sup>86</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.119; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.87f.

<sup>87</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.165.

<sup>88</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.122, cf. Stuckenbruck, *Theology*, p.137f. for a critique of Gaston's view.

in it as he rightly notes and tries to argue. For him Paul is still addressing in Rom.3:9-20 the Jewish teacher of Rom.2:17-24. We have argued above, however, that Paul is addressing in Rom.2:17-24 the Jews in general. If he does so there, Stowers' focus on the Jewish teacher in Romans 3 is not valid, for Paul is not indicating a change of address in Romans 3. Rom.3:9-20 is thus concerned with the Jews and Gentiles in general and Rom.3:21, which stands indeed in flow of Paul's thought, is likewise about all and not just the Gentiles. The righteousness revealed apart from the law is, therefore, also for the Jews. However, we do not want to deny that in Rom.3:21 Paul is also arguing for the inclusion of the Gentiles,<sup>89</sup> but he does not do so in the sense of Gaston and Stowers. Paul is reasoning for the inclusion of the Gentiles by arguing for the possibility of their justification by faith like for the Jews.

If their view is not correct, we will have to discuss the position of the other scholars.<sup>90</sup> They have argued that the law is invalidated or that the law played no part in the revealed righteousness. Dunn's position to take χωρὶς νόμου as a synonym for the similar expression in Rom.3:28 and χωρὶς ἔργων (Rom.4:6) and these expressions as standing in contrast to ἐν τῷ νόμῳ and ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (Rom.3:19-20),<sup>91</sup> would indeed make sense. Such an viewpoint would support our given interpretation of Rom.3:28. Paul would then not fully reject the law, but the wrong interpretation of it and its works. In support of such an interpretation, it may be said that in Rom.2:12-29 and Rom.3:19-20 Paul was already arguing for such a view of the law for the time before the Christ event. Furthermore, it is confirmed by his positive statements (Rom.3:2+31) about the law and by his arguments against the 'works of the law' in Rom.3:19-20, 27-28 and Rom.4. We may conclude that the law was not invalidated, but that righteousness was revealed apart from the wrong attitude towards the law. This admits no soteriological efficacy to the law and its works, but yet asks for the proper fulfilment of the law. The justification by faith

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<sup>89</sup> He is especially interested to show that the Gentiles are included, since the historical reasons (see 'The historical Context' p.21-27 above) questioned whether the Gentiles have to keep the law and consequently how it is possible that they are included among the people of God (Israel).

<sup>90</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.87f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.119; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.185f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.344; Dunn, *Romans*, p.165.

<sup>91</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.165

enables one to 'do good' (Rom.2:7+10), to 'keep the law' (Rom.2:26-27), so that by it the law is fulfilled and verified (Rom.3:27-28, 31).<sup>92</sup>

We have already discussed Rom.3:19-20, but it should be stressed that the function of the law for Jew or Gentile as described here is not dismissed after the Christ event.<sup>93</sup> Rather, the function of the law to reveal sin remains (Rom.3:22b-23; 4:15). Rom.3:23 refers back to 1:23 and 3:9 and builds thus a bridge between the time before and after Christ, for all have sinned and lack the δόξα, which is equal to the righteousness of God here.<sup>94</sup> Rom.4:15 likewise shows the continuing function of the law. There the argument is held general so that it seems unnecessary to limit it to the time before Christ. It is applicable to both, the time before and after the Christ event. The law still works wrath, for where the law is there is violation (Rom.4:15b). Before and after Christ all are consequently in need of God's grace. The function of the law, therefore, to reveal sin and to work wrath remains. However, the yet more important purpose of the law is to reveal humanity's need for God's grace.

The revealing function of the law is confirmed by Paul. More specifically, though, he rejects the idea that the law or its works are soteriologically efficacious. By stating that χωρὶς νόμου in Rom.3:21 is a synonym of χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου (Rom.3:28) and χωρὶς ἔργων (Rom.4:6), Paul rejects the idea of 'works of the law', since they play no part in the revealed righteousness. Rom.3:24-25 explains further how Paul understands this revealed righteousness and its relation to the law and its works. God's righteousness is shown (Rom.3:25) by justifying Jew and Gentile by grace (χάρις) as a gift (δωρεάν, Rom.3:24). The grace of God is an unconditional gracious action of God to justify the sinner.<sup>95</sup> The δωρεάν together with the χάρις functions to reinforce the thought that no payment is needed for the justification. This clearly corresponds to the χωρὶς νόμου of Rom.3:21, for Paul's aim is still to argue against the wrong understanding of the law and its works. This is again supported by

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<sup>92</sup> See 'The Gentiles, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith' p.52-58 above.

<sup>93</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.186.

<sup>94</sup> Δόξα is used in an antithetical context and refers back to Rom.1:23 and 3:9. Rom.3:23 reflects the loss of the justified state (having possibly Adam in mind). Thus the equivalence of δόξα and δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is given. Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.89, Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.119f.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.168f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.189; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.347f.

Rom.3:27 (which we have discussed above) with its contrast between νόμος τῶν ἔργων and νόμος πίστεως. That Paul's intention is to establish a proper understanding of the law is further confirmed by the argument in Rom.3:28-30 and the positive statement about the law in Rom.3:31.

No further discussion of Rom.4:11-16 or Rom.3:27-31 is required, for the interpretation of these passages given above and the arguments against the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach are certainly valid for the time after the Christ event. We can, therefore, conclude this section by stating that, as before the Christ event, the concept of justification by faith is available for Jew and Gentile alike (Rom.3:22-24) and the law is not nullified. The law still reveals sin and works wrath (Rom.3:19-20, 22b-23) in order that man should acknowledge his need of God's grace (Rom.3:24). Furthermore, it is made clear that the law and its works do not carry any soteriological efficacy (Rom.3:21, 24, 27), but is fulfilled by being justified by faith (Rom.3:27+31).

It remains to discuss the statement μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν (Rom.3:21). 'Law' and 'prophets' is usually taken to denote the Jewish scriptures.<sup>96</sup> The revealed righteousness stands thus not in contrast to the Jewish scriptures but is confirmed by them, as shown by Rom.3:31. That the Scriptures confirm the revealed righteousness might not be taken only as an attestation of the now revealed righteousness and a continuation of the law in a certain form after the Christ event, but also as an argument that the same righteousness of God was present before the Christ event through the concept of justification by faith. If the Jewish scriptures attest to the concept of the justification by faith, one might want to argue that the concept is contained in the Jewish scriptures and that the Jews were meant to understand the scriptures this way. However, such interpretation would certainly go beyond the evidence of the text, so that we will only note the function of the Jewish scriptures to attest to the justification by faith. The fact that it can attest to the concept of justification by faith, taken together with all the other reasons given, confirms that there is a salvation historical continuity between the time before and after the Christ event.

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<sup>96</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.165f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.69; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.344; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.87; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.119; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.56f.

In summarising this section on the relation of law and faith before and after the Christ event, we conclude that the concept of justification by faith was present for everyone at any time. As long as the law was given, it functioned to reveal sin and to work wrath so that human beings might become aware of their need of God's grace. Before and after the Christ event Paul rejects the 'works of the law' as being the wrong attitude towards the law, but not the law itself which is fulfilled in the proper way by the justified by faith.

### **Christology**

This section will deal with the relation of Christology to faith. A broad spectrum of opinion exists on this subject. Hays, for example, claims "that Romans is from start to finish thoroughly theocentric. Nowhere is there any statement comparable to Gal 2:16 which unambiguously presents Christ as an object of faith."<sup>97</sup> Cranfield in contrast comments on Rom.3:22 that "for the first time in Romans Christ is explicitly referred to as the object of faith."<sup>98</sup> We will attempt to clarify how the Christology is related to the concept of justification by faith by discussing the efficacy of the Christ event and the meaning of the phrase πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom.3:22).

### ***The Efficacy of the Christ Event***

In this section we will discuss how the Christ event is related to the times before and after it, and consequently whether and for whom it was efficient. We will, first, look at the time prior to the Christ event about which we have argued that humanity was meant to be justified by faith. However, we may ask how this justification is linked to Christology? Three possible positions we will have to discuss in turn. First, that the Jewish sacrificial system was somehow efficient till the Christ event. Second, that those before the Christ event were meant to be justified by faith in God without any relation to it. And finally, that all were meant to be justified by faith in God with a relation to Christology, i.e. that Christ's deed was efficient also for those before the Christ event.

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<sup>97</sup> Hays, *Christ*, p.170f.

<sup>98</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.70.

The first viewpoint is excluded by our former discussion, so that we can move on to discuss whether the Christ event was somehow efficient for those before the Christ event or not. Paul's statements in Rom.1:18-3:20 do not mention this subject directly, but Rom.2:16 hints at a certain direction of his thought. We have argued that Rom.2:14-16 is not concerned with Gentile Christians but rather Paul is building up an argument that the proper standard of the law is known to the Gentiles and that they will be judged according to it. Paul then states in Rom.2:16 that God will judge all through Jesus Christ. That the eschatological judgement is in view is not to be doubted. However, the unexpected move in these verses to the eschatological judgement have lead some scholars to put this verse at another place (after Rom.2:12, 29, or 5a),<sup>99</sup> others to insert something at the beginning of Rom.2:16,<sup>100</sup> and others to assign it to a later redactor.<sup>101</sup> However, Käsemann rightly notes that the reference to the eschatological judgement is not misplaced here, but necessary to give the preceding some real meaning.<sup>102</sup>

Before we can reach an interpretation we must first clarify whether διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is to be read with κρίνει<sup>103</sup> or τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.<sup>104</sup> The first option seems to be more likely since Christ as the eschatological judge, empowered by God for this task, is a familiar concept in other New Testament passages (e.g. Matt.25:31-33; John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17; 31, 1.Cor.4:5; 2.Cor.5:10).<sup>105</sup> If then we conclude that Rom.2:16 is at the proper place and not an addition of a later redactor, what does it mean in the given context? We have already rejected the option that it refers to Gentile Christians. The alternative is that the Gospel as Paul understands it, contains the idea that Jesus will judge all at the end.<sup>106</sup> The all, therefore, includes those Gentiles of Rom.2:14-15 before the Christ event who were aware of the standards of the law so that they too will be judged by him.

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<sup>99</sup> E.g. Dodd, *Romans*, p.31, 35.

<sup>100</sup> E.g. Michel, *Römer*, 126; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.81.

<sup>101</sup> E.g. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.95.

<sup>102</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.63; cf. Eichholz, *Theologie*, p.92ff.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.62f. for a full discussion of the different options.

<sup>103</sup> So most scholars.

<sup>104</sup> E.g. Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.80f.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.103f. for more reasons.

<sup>106</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.106; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.63, Wilckens, *Römer*, p.137, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.312; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.42.



Of interest to us in this context is that Christ will be the judge of the Gentiles before the Christ event and not God as in Rom.2:3-5. One might want to argue that Christ is the representative or elect of God just like contemporary "Jews sometimes expected Yahweh to exercise judgement through an Elect One, e.g., through Enoch (*1 Enoch* 45:3-6) or Melchizedek (11QMelch) or Abel (*T. Abraham*. 13:5)."<sup>107</sup> However, one is left wondering why the statement about judgement is here restricted to Christ also for those before the Christ event if they were justified by faith in God. Why should Christ be given the judgement if his soteriological deed has no relevance for those before the Christ event? Furthermore, if the Gospel<sup>108</sup> does not only contain the idea of Christ as the judge of all, but is the standard by which *all* will be judged as some scholars claim,<sup>109</sup> then it is even more questionable which role Christ and the Gospel has in relation to the Gentiles before the Christ event. If it is correct that those Gentiles were meant to be justified by faith and if Christ is their judge and the Gospel the standard by which they are judged, one might infer that Paul attributes this role to Christ since even these Gentiles were justified, because Christ's atoning deed made it possible. This would explain why they are liable to Christ and not to God.

However, this verse is certainly not explicitly spelling out that the Gentiles before the Christ event were justified because of Christ's atoning deed. We will need to consider Rom.3:25b if we are to affirm that such an interpretation is possible, for Paul's statement that διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων seems to address this issue much more directly. The meaning of πάρεσις, which occurs only here in the NT and never in the LXX, is disputed. Is it taking place in the past or the present and what does it mean if it refers to the past? If πάρεσις would refer to the present, it would mean that he has pardoned the time of the individual before the being justified by faith.<sup>110</sup> However, most scholars agree that it refers to the time before the Christ event.<sup>111</sup> It remains open if it means 'pardon, remission' as in extrabiblical Greek literature, so that the statement would imply that the sins of the

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<sup>107</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.312.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. p.75 for a discussion of εὐαγγέλιον.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.106.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.196.

<sup>111</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.173; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.196; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.126; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.351f.; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.58.

human beings before the Christ event were pardoned by God?<sup>112</sup> Or does it carry the meaning of 'passing over, letting go' (cf. Lk.11:42; Heb.12:12)?<sup>113</sup> In this case the phrase would mean that God demonstrates his righteousness by now wiping out sins that he only passed over before the Christ event. The first interpretation thus claims that the sins of the past were pardoned, because Jesus' death demonstrates that the Jewish sacrificial system was effective, but has now been superseded and is now no longer needed.<sup>114</sup> The other interpretation maintains the Jewish sacrificial system was not effective. To a certain degree it may have been the proper form of dealing with sin, but it was not the final solution. The final solution has come διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Rom.3:24). Since we have argued that before the Christ event even the Jews were meant to be justified by faith and that the law and its works carry no soteriological efficacy, the first option cannot be accepted as correct. It remains to discuss the second option further that God with Christ is wiping out the sins from before the Christ event. The inference is that the sins were not dealt with before the Christ event, even for those who did have faith in God! Their faith in God found its fulfilment in the Christ event for there did God through Christ Jesus justify them. The Christ event brought about the justification of all who believe (Rom.3:22), including those in the time before the Christ event.

How then could Abraham at his time be called 'righteous' if he was justified through Christ's sacrificial death that occurred many years later (Gen.15:6; Rom.4:3)? God justified Abraham in his divine forbearance (Rom.3:26). God knew that Christ would once atone for the sins of those in the time before the Christ event. The one having faith in God was thus in fact justified through Jesus' death without any knowledge of him or his deed. In this sense we might want to say that Christ through his death justified the sinner of the time before the Christ event. This view would provide an adequate explanation of why anybody at all could be justified by faith before the Christ event, for if it were not by Christ's death, who would have atoned for the sins committed if the Jewish system is not effective? Furthermore, if even Abraham was justified by faith in God through Christ's death, it would no

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<sup>112</sup> E.g. Bultmann, S.v. ἀφίημι, p.508f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.92.

<sup>113</sup> E.g. Dodd, *Romans*, p.59f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.74.

<sup>114</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.173.

longer be surprising that Paul can compare Abraham's and the Christian's faith as it was for some of those who hold the traditional view. And finally, the Christ event itself would gain universal significance not only for the present but also the past. His atoning deed as the basis of the justification by faith would be the right antithesis to the 'works of the law', which Paul rejected for the time before and after the Christ event. This interpretation of Rom.3:25b thus acknowledges that Christ's sacrificial deed is effective even in the past.

Paul links this idea with the idea of God's righteousness. If the expression δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is a subjective ('the righteousness of God') or objective genitive ('God's righteousness') in Rom.3:25b and in the rest of the instances of Rom.3:21-26 is a discussion we do not want to enter too much, but the repetition in Rom.3:26a suggests that God proves his righteousness by the Christ event rather than that he reveals the righteous status given by him.<sup>115</sup> Through the propitiation provided by Christ's soteriological deed, God has shown himself just, for he did not forget the sins of the past (Rom.2:1-11) but acknowledges the faith of those who had faith in him.

One might want to argue that solely the 'faith in God' justified those in the time before the Christ event. Abraham was reckoned righteous, because he believed in God (Gen.15:6; Rom.4:3), not since Christ atoned for the sins of those before the Christ event.<sup>116</sup> At this point we enter again the discussion of *ἀρρεσις* and its meaning. We have rejected the interpretation that it refers to the pardoning of sins through the Jewish sacrificial system. However, some scholars claim that it refers to the pardoning of sins before the Christ event through faith in God.<sup>117</sup> This is supported by Rom.3:25-26a<sup>118</sup> or even Rom.3:24-26a (the second mainly because of the awkwardness of *δικαιούμενοι*)<sup>119</sup> which has been called a pre-Pauline formula

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.173; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.195f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.74; con. Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.121f, Käsemann, *Römer*, p.88.

<sup>116</sup> We will discuss Abraham's faith in God later in greater detail, which is indeed not focused on a propitiation in the future but simply on God. See 'Christology' p.103-104 below.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. Bultmann, S.v. *ἀφίημι*, p.508f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.92.

<sup>118</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.190; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.120f.

<sup>119</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.90; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.342f.; Eichholz, *Theologie*, p.191.

and is said to express non-Pauline thoughts.<sup>120</sup> These non-Pauline thoughts can be found especially in Rom.3:25b, for

1,18—3,20 haben die Vergangenheit nicht unter das Thema der Nachsicht übenden Geduld, sondern der Zornesoffenbarung gestellt (...), und in 2,4 sind Langmut und Geduld nicht Nachsicht, sondern wie in 9,2; Apk. Bar 59,6 das Aufhalten des vollen Zorns und insofern Rechtsgrund für das endgültige Gericht. Die hier vorliegende Motivation der Aussage widerstreitet schlechthin paulinischer Theologie.<sup>121</sup>

For Käsemann the formula Paul uses is a Jewish-Christian viewpoint that he comments and corrects.<sup>122</sup> Paul uses this pre-Pauline tradition since it confirms the justification of the sinner. It reflects the forgiveness found in Ex.34:6 and in the Jewish tradition such as CD II:4f., 1 QS XI:12ff. and 4 Es. 8:31-36.<sup>123</sup> The text thus refers to the sins of the Jewish people before the Christ event and its forgiveness in the change of aeons. "Jedenfalls wird hier die eschatologische Restitution des Bundes gefeiert und als Erweis der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit gekennzeichnet."<sup>124</sup> Paul is able to use this formula, since it refers to Christ's eschatological and sacrificial deed that brought about salvation. He adds to the formula in Rom.3:26b the 'faith in Christ'-language to give it a Pauline meaning. With this addition it refers not only to the renewal of the covenant and the forgiveness of past sins, but also to God's righteousness in the present new aeon. Paul is not only eschatologically confirming the Jewish covenant, the forgiveness of former sins and thus proving God's righteousness, but concerned with God's righteousness by faith in the new aeon.<sup>125</sup>

In response to Käsemann's statement that Rom.3:25b expresses non-Pauline thoughts it may be said that it builds on the wrong assumption that Paul condemned all ancestral faith.<sup>126</sup> The opposite is true, Paul argues that Jew and Gentile were meant to be justified by faith.<sup>127</sup> However, it remains open if the formula reflects a Jewish-Christian view that does not attribute to the Jewish sacrificial system

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<sup>120</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.93f., Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.

<sup>121</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.93.

<sup>122</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.93f.

<sup>123</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.93.

<sup>124</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.94.

<sup>125</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.

<sup>126</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.174.

<sup>127</sup> See 'The Law and Faith before the Christ Event' p.35-38, 48-52 above.

soteriological efficacy but to faith in God as such. In other words, do we have to understand *πάρεσις* in the sense of pardoning the sins of the past for those who had 'faith in God'? Following Käsemann's argumentation, Rom.3:24-26a, may it be a pre-Pauline formula or not,<sup>128</sup> states that Christ was put forward as a sacrifice of atonement. This sacrifice atoned for the sins previously committed.<sup>129</sup> Without entering the discussion about the meaning of *ἱλαστήριον*, most commentators agree that Paul refers here to the sacrificial death of Christ in the one or other sense (cf. Rom.4:25; 5:21; 8:3).<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, we have argued above that the phrase *διὰ τὴν πᾶρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων* (Rom.3:25b) refers to the time before the Christ event. If, therefore, the formula states that the sacrificial death of Christ atoned for the sins and if this sacrifice was efficient for the ones before the Christ event, we may infer that Christ brought about their justification. May it be that *πάρεσις* means 'pardon' (i.e. that sins were forgiven before the Christ event) or that it means 'passing over' (i.e. that sins are with the Christ event wiped out) in both cases has the final justification come about by the sacrificial death of Christ. In the first case did they have faith in God, God justified them and provided later in Christ the sacrificial means for their justification. In the second case did they have faith in God, God justified them but did not forget their sins. He passed over them for in Christ he would provide the sacrificial means for their final justification. Faith in God is according to Rom.3:25b without Christ's deed not efficient. The Christ event was needed to justify even those of the time before the Christ event.

Looking at Romans 5, we note that it confirms our conclusion concerning the efficacy of the Christ event. It has been interpreted as referring to the time after the Christ event.<sup>131</sup> However, following Paul's flow of thought and looking at the language in Romans 5, one may argue that it could be applied to those before the Christ event as well.<sup>132</sup> That he addresses the Romans in the first person plural (e.g. Rom.5:1) indicates that he focuses on the implications of the argued justification by

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<sup>128</sup> For other views and possibilities cf. Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.160; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.107; Dunn, *Romans*, p.163f.

<sup>129</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.91+94.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.170f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.91; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.122.

<sup>131</sup> E.g. Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.142; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.393f.

faith for them. However, that he focuses on the implications for them does not necessarily exclude others. Those of the time before the Christ event may well be included. There is in the whole of the chapter no indication that Paul refers specifically to the time after the Christ event. Rather the opposite is true, with Rom.5:6 (ἀσεβῆ) and Rom.5:9 (ὁργή) Paul refers to concepts that are used in the context of the time before the Christ event (Rom.1:18; 4:5). He, furthermore, compares Christ with Adam and the effect of their deed on 'all men' (Rom.5:18). The inference would be that he is still thinking in terms of all humankind with a focus on themselves. The Christological references (Rom.5:1, 8-11, 15, 18-21) would thus indicate that Christ's deed 'leads to justification and life for all' (Rom.5:18), including those before the Christ event.<sup>133</sup> Romans 5 seems to confirm the efficacy of the Christ event throughout the history of humankind.

We may summarise that there is a relation of the Christology to faith in Romans before the Christ event. Jew and Gentile were justified by faith in God. However, they were justified, because the sacrificial deed of Christ atoned for their sins. Christ's expiation is thus not only efficient for the time after his deed but has universal significance by also justifying those prior his deed. However, even though it is by faith that they were justified, Christ was not the object of their faith, but God himself.

We will now move on to discuss briefly the efficacy of Christ's atoning deed after the Christ event. Most if not all scholars would agree that on the basis of Rom.3:21-26 the Gentiles after the Christ event can be justified by faith since Christ has atoned for their sins. However, we have argued<sup>134</sup> that both, Jew and Gentile are justified by faith for Jew and Gentile are sinners, and that the law and its works carry no soteriological efficacy. If the law and its works carry no soteriological efficacy and all are sinners, we can infer that the law and its deed are not able to provide the means of atonement for the sins of humanity. Consequently, another soteriologically efficient sacrifice was needed, which was given in the death of Christ Jesus. This is

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.132f; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.286f., 326f.

<sup>133</sup> We are not at this point able to discuss Romans 5 in greater depth, but the given brief arguments might indicate that Paul was not restricting the efficacy of the Christ event to the time after it.

<sup>134</sup> See 'The Law' p.34-64 above.

after all our considerations clearly the sense of Rom.3:21-26. If or how Christ is the object of faith because of his sacrificial death remains to be clarified.

We, therefore, conclude that Christ's sacrificial and atoning death was efficient for all humankind at any time. All were and are justified by faith since Christ died for their sins. Christ was not the direct object of faith for those before the Christ event for they were justified by their faith in God. What it means that Christ was not the direct object of faith and whether he is the object of faith for those after the Christ event will be discussed next.

### *Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*

In this section we will take a closer look at Rom.3:21-26, especially 3:22. In the previous section some interpretations of the phrase *καὶ ἄνευ νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανερώται* (Rom.3:21) have already been given. We have argued that Paul indicates by this phrase that the righteousness of God that was hidden before the Christ event is now revealed in it. However, we have not discussed what Paul means when he writes that the righteousness has been disclosed *διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας* (Rom.3:22). This phrase is of primary importance and needs a thorough exegesis. Hays, Freed, Gaston, and Stowers have argued that *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* has to be translated as 'faithfulness of Jesus Christ' and likewise in 3:26. Hays lists several reasons for such an interpretation.<sup>135</sup> Firstly, Hays argues that Romans is theocentric and that Christ is nowhere the object of faith (cf. Rom.4:24).<sup>136</sup> Secondly, this phrase is sandwiched between two subjective genitives that are translated like the suggested translation (Rom.3:3, *πίστις θεοῦ*; Rom.4:12+16, *πίστις Ἀβραάμ*). Furthermore, the context gives no indication that Christ is the object of faith. Thirdly, there is the precise parallel of *ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ* and *ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ* in Rom.3:26 and Rom.4:16. This indicates that the two phrases should be translated alike. Fourthly, Hays suggests that if *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* means 'faith in Jesus Christ' then the phrase *εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας* is redundant. Why should Paul add this phrase? Finally, it is difficult to see that 'the righteousness of God being revealed through believing in Christ Jesus' makes sense. It would make more sense to argue

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<sup>135</sup> Hays, *Christ*, p.170-172; cf. Freed, *Apostle*, p.90ff.; Gaston, *Torah*, p.117, 172.

that the righteousness of God has been revealed in Christ's faithfulness, in his obedience. For these reasons πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ should, according to Hays, be translated as a subjective genitive meaning 'the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'.

Most scholars would not agree with this view even though this interpretation might seem plausible.<sup>137</sup> They argue that it runs counter to the main thrust of Paul's theology.<sup>138</sup> Just as Hays argues that Jesus is nowhere in Romans the object of faith, so Dunn argues that nowhere else does Paul draw attention to Christ's faithfulness in Romans, even where it would have been highly appropriate, such as in Romans 4.<sup>139</sup> There the πίστις of Abraham is an example for the believer and not for Christ. That πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ can be translated as an objective genitive is proven by the parallel scriptures, Pauline (Phil.1:27) and others (Mk.11:22; Acts 3:16a; Col.2:12; 2.Thess.2:13; Jas.2:1; Rev.14:12). Furthermore, Jesus Christ *is* presented as the object of faith in Rom.10:9+14; 1.Cor.12:3; 2.Cor.4:5+14; Gal.2:16; and Phil.1.29. Furthermore, the verb πίστευειν never has Christ as the subject in the NT, not even Heb.12:2.<sup>140</sup> If Paul would have wanted to say something in the sense of 'the obedience of Christ' he could have used ὑπακοή as in Rom.5:19 (cf. especially 2.Cor.10:5). The repetition in the phrase 'for all who believe' is not superfluous with the traditional interpretation, but emphasises the universal outreach of God in the Christ event. The argument that Rom.3:22 is only intelligible with Hays' interpretation of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is not correct, since the main issue in this verse is how God's righteousness by which he acts on man's behalf operates.<sup>141</sup> Finally, Paul's intention is to contrast the 'works of the law' with 'faith' as in Gal.2:16, which being very similar to Rom.3:22 with its διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is rendered equivalently by ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν.<sup>142</sup> The interpretation suggested by Hays has some strong supporting

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<sup>136</sup> Hays, *Christ*, p.170.

<sup>137</sup> E.g. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.88; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.345f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.166f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.188; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.70; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.112; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.105.

<sup>138</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.345.

<sup>139</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.166.

<sup>140</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.345.

<sup>141</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.166.

<sup>142</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.167.



arguments, but some of them (the theocentricity of Romans and that Christ is not the object of faith in the context) may be interpreted differently (as will be done later), so that they do not necessarily support Hays' view. The other reasons have been argued against above. The interpretation of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ as 'faithfulness of Jesus Christ' is thus not as convincing as the arguments supporting the traditional view. We, therefore, conclude that the phrase πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ should be understood as an objective genitive meaning 'the faith in Jesus Christ', and likewise in Rom.3:26.

Paul is thus with Rom.3:22+26 introducing Christ in a formulation that seems to imply that he is the object of faith. Before we move on to discuss what πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in our given context means, we will look briefly at the meaning of the phrase that 'the righteousness of God [has been disclosed] through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe' (Rom.3:22). Hays states that "the righteousness of God has been manifested in the past, in the faith/obedience of the crucified one."<sup>143</sup> However, since we have rejected this translation of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, it must have a different interpretation. Fitzmyer argues that this phrase means that Christ himself is the manifestation of God's righteousness and human beings appropriate the effects of the manifested righteousness through faith in him.<sup>144</sup> Dunn and Wilckens agree with this view since Paul's contrast is still between faith and 'works of the law'.<sup>145</sup> In the Christ event the righteousness of God has been revealed (whether it is subjective or objective) and the sinner participates in this righteousness by having faith in Christ. How is in Christ the righteousness been revealed? This is further explained by Paul in Rom.3:24-25. We have in part discussed Rom.3:24,<sup>146</sup> but we have neglected the discussion of the phrase τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Rom.3:24b), the meaning of Rom.3:25a (especially the meaning of ἱλαστήριον), and the in-depth discussion of the question of whether Paul quotes traditional material in Rom.3:24-25 for this would be of no importance to our

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<sup>143</sup> Hays, *Christ*, p.172.

<sup>144</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.345.

<sup>145</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.167; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.187f.

<sup>146</sup> See 'The Law and Faith after the Christ Event' p.62-63 above.

subject.<sup>147</sup> What is important for our current debate is the fact that in these verses Christ is described as the one who by his sacrificial death expiated for sins of humanity and made thus the justification by faith possible. Together with the already argued thesis that his death was efficient for Jew and Gentile, before and after the Christ event, the question arises as to whether our interpretation of Rom.3:22, and the meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, are effected when even those before the Christ event are included in the εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας. To put this differently, does our observation effect our interpretation of Rom.3:22 that Christ was only atoning for the sins and not the direct object of faith for those before the Christ event?

A brief look at Rom.1:16-17 might help us to clarify this further, for Rom.3:21ff. elaborates and repeats Rom.1:16-17.<sup>148</sup> Jesus Christ is not mentioned by name in these verses, but the following discussion of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον as the 'good news' will show that it clearly refers to the Christ event. Τὸ εὐαγγέλιον itself is here not so much the *preaching of* the Christ event and its effects,<sup>149</sup> but the fact that Christ has come and atoned for the sins of humankind, so that because of it one can be justified by faith (cf. Rom.1:3-4).<sup>150</sup> Later copies thus rightly added τοῦ Χριστοῦ (cf. Gal.1:6f.).<sup>151</sup> Rom.1:17 states like Rom.3:21 that with the Christ event the righteousness of God is revealed, although Rom.1:17 uses the present tense and Rom.3:21 the perfect tense to express this. Rom.3:21 thus points to the Christ event in the past with its effects on the present. Rom.1:17, on the other hand, has been interpreted to mean that in the ongoing preaching of the Gospel God's righteousness is continuously revealed.<sup>152</sup> However, Paul would probably have used a word like κηρύσσειν to express such a sense. It seems more likely that Paul intended to

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Büchsel, S.v. ἀπολύτρωσις, p.354-359; Büchsel, S.v. ἱλαστήριον, p.321-324; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.120-128; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.89-93; Dunn, *Romans*, p.169-174; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.189-196; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.348-352 for a detailed discussion.

<sup>148</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.118; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.341.

<sup>149</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.61

<sup>150</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.19; Dunn, *Romans*, p.10

<sup>151</sup> Cf. D<sup>c</sup>, Ψ, and the *Koine* text tradition.

<sup>152</sup> E.g. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.20.

describe the ongoing impact of the 'good news' that was hidden but is now revealed since the Christ event.<sup>153</sup>

We may note, furthermore, that Paul also uses universal language in Rom.1:16. Παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι will by the Gospel (i.e. the Christ event and the made possible justification by faith) find σωτηρία. Paul's readers would understand the term σωτηρία in its religious meaning as the deliverance from peril and restoration to wholeness. It is usually an eschatological term in Paul's usage, but has a present sense here as indicated by the present tense of the verb. The preposition εἰς before the σωτηρία indicates that the Gospel leads right up to or into this salvation, so that the one having faith is already on his way to the final salvation. It is interesting that the whole formulation of Rom.1:16 is again in no way restricted to the time after the Christ event even though the term 'Gospel' is used. If our definition of the Gospel as consisting of the Christ event and the made possible justification by faith is correct, then the statement that 'it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith' could well be applied to all, Jew and Gentile, before and after the Christ event, for one needs not to be aware of it to make it the power of God for salvation. The only condition mentioned is that one ought to have faith. 'Faith' could refer to faith in God or Christ. The language of Rom.1:16-17 and the elaboration of this phrase negatively in Rom.1:18-3:20 and positively from Rom.3:21 onwards is theocentric. Furthermore, apart from Rom.3:22+26 Paul always speaks about faith in God, so that 'faith' in Rom.1:16 most probably refers to 'faith in God'. This is supported by our argument that all were meant to be justified before the Christ event and that Rom.3:25b-26a maintains that Jesus' death is effective for the one justified by faith before and after the Christ event. This, Paul does not restrict the soteriological power of the Gospel to the time after the Christ event here. One might want to argue that this interpretation of the Gospel and consequently of Rom.1:16-17 is only intelligible if in the term εὐαγγέλιον the idea of 'faith in Christ' is included. We have not fully clarified yet what 'faith in Christ' actually means, but if this includes the notion of trust in, commitment and obedience to Christ two solutions are possible. The first solution would simply assume that the idea of 'faith in Christ' in the Gospel is restricted to those after the Christ event as suggested by Rom.3:25-26. In that case

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<sup>153</sup> So Dunn, *Romans*, p.47f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.86-88.

our proposed interpretation would not suffer any loss, for the Gospel then would mainly consist in the fact that Christ provided the means of justification for everyone through his sacrificial death, whereby it would also acknowledge that those before the Christ event were justified through faith in God and those after it through faith in Christ. The second solution builds on what Paul could possibly mean by πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. We will discuss this next, but it can already be noted at this point that if Paul is mainly interested in the functional aspects of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, our proposed interpretation remains intelligible as our following discussion of the phrase will show. Rom.1:16 has, therefore, universal significance for all times.

With this in mind we will have to clarify what πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ meant for Paul, both, in Rom.1:16, where it is hidden in the term 'Gospel' and especially in our primary text, Rom.3:22+26, where it is spelt out. Before we begin our discussion we should note briefly that no-where else in Romans does Paul spell out the idea of faith in Christ (which Hays used as an argument for his thesis). This fact certainly makes our interpretation of the πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ even more important, for Rom.3:21-26 contains central parts of the fundament on which Paul builds his argument later on.

We have agreed that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is an objective genitive and should be translated 'faith in Christ'. But what does it mean to have 'faith in Christ' and why is Paul's language more theocentric than Christocentric even after his introduction of Christ in Rom.3:21? The best example of this is certainly Rom.4:24 where Paul states that the account of Abraham was written down for us so that to us *after the Christ event* will our faith in God be reckoned, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν. That Paul uses 'faith in God' language for those before the Christ event including Abraham is reasonable since Christ could not have been the direct object of faith there. However, why does he continue to do so for the time after the Christ event and what is the meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in this context?

Dunn states that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ was understood by the recipients

in terms of trust in, commitment and obedience to, this Jesus (cf. Gal 2:16). Expressed as an antithesis to 'works of the law' (3:20), it is clearly intended to denote *the basis of a relationship which is not dependent on specific ritual acts,*

*but is direct and immediate, a relying on the risen Christ rather than a resting on the law.*<sup>154</sup>

We have already argued that the faith concept is the antithesis to the 'works of the law', but the questions which arise are in what sense 'faith in Christ' means "a relying on the risen Christ" and how does it "denotes the basis of a relationship"? Bultmann understands the faith language to denote primarily the acceptance of the kerygma (cf. Rom.10:17), "dh die Unterwerfung unter den von Gott beschlossenen und in Christus erschlossenen Heilsweg."<sup>155</sup> Obedience, for Bultmann, is equal to faith and denotes the acknowledgement of the soteriological path of grace provided by God.<sup>156</sup> Faith in Christ includes, furthermore, the confession of Jesus' Lordship (Rom.10:9), which is the confession that all one is and has is one's because of God's deed in Jesus Christ.<sup>157</sup> However, for the confession of Jesus' Lordship Paul uses the term κύριος (e.g. Rom.1:4+7; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 21). Κύριος was in the LXX the translation for יְיָ (‘lord, master’), which was on occasion applied to Yahweh (e.g. Ps.114:7). He also continues to call God κύριος (e.g. Rom.4:8; 9:28+29; 15:11).<sup>158</sup> The confession of Jesus' Lordship seems thus to be a confession that he is on a par with Yahweh of the Old Testament. The 'faith in Christ'-language would, therefore, by its confession of Jesus' Lordship suggest that the one having faith also trusts in, is committed and obedient to Jesus himself and not to God alone.<sup>159</sup> This is supported by the fact that Paul calls himself δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Rom.1:1) and not 'slave of God', by the personal language 'our Lord' (e.g. Rom.1:4; 4:24), and by the clear commitment to Christ (Rom.14:8). However, Foerster states about the title κύριος that it is

ein Verhältnisbegriff, es bezeichnet das, wovon Menschen sich abhängig machen oder tatsächlich abhängig sind. Für die Christen gibt es nur einen Gott, mit dem sie zu rechnen haben, von und zu dem alles ist (vgl 1 K 15,28) und einen Herrn,

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<sup>154</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.178.

<sup>155</sup> Bultmann, S.v. πιστεύω, p.218.

<sup>156</sup> Bultmann, S.v. πιστεύω, p.219.

<sup>157</sup> Bultmann, S.v. πιστεύω, p.218.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.112f.; Lyon, S.v. *Lord, Jesus as*, p.647f. for a further discussion of this term.

<sup>159</sup> Kertelge, *Grundthemen*, p.127.

von dem sie abhängig sind, durch den alles ist, durch den sie ihr Christsein haben.<sup>160</sup>

The Lordship of Christ thus emphasises the functional side of the relation to Christ. Through the deed of Christ those humans who accept and submit to the Gospel have become dependent on his atoning deed. Jesus is 'our Lord' for he atoned for our sins and made thus justification possible, so that humankind is dependent on him for its justification, as indicated by Rom.4:25.

This tendency towards and emphasis on the functional aspect of Christ's deed actually outweigh the personal aspect in Romans.<sup>161</sup> Paul in his argumentation in Romans focuses on the role of Christ in God's plan to bring about justification for all. From this we may infer that even though Paul knows of trust in, commitment and obedience to Christ, πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Rom.3:22 refers to the acknowledgement of God's deed in Christ Jesus, that Christ atoned for the sins of all that all may be justified. Agreeing to such an interpretation Fitzmyer like Bultmann calls faith in Rom.3:22 "the mode whereby human beings respond to the challenge of the gospel and appropriate to themselves the effects of the Christ-event."<sup>162</sup> Our suggestion is thus that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ indeed denotes trust in, commitment and obedience to Christ, but that in the context of Rom.3:22 the emphasis is on the trust in God, that he has made with the Christ event the justification by faith possible for all. 'Faith in Christ' in Rom.3:22+26 is mainly the acceptance of the good news that in Christ God has atoned for the sins of humankind through which one is justified by faith.

Whether this suggestion is supported by Romans and whether the parallel passage Gal.2:16 has any bearing on our interpretation remains to be shown. Some of the observations that Hays used to argue for the subjective genitive of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ actually confirm our claim.<sup>163</sup> He maintains that Romans is theocentric and not Christocentric and that the context indicates Christ not as the object of faith. That Romans is mainly theocentric is shown by the fact that in the whole of Rom.1:18-3:20 Christ is only mentioned in Rom.2:16 and there is no hint that one ought to have

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<sup>160</sup> Foerster, S.v. κύριος, p.1090.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.110f.

<sup>162</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.346.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Hays, *Christ*, p.170-172.

trust in Christ, be committed to him, or obey him. The language is rather focused on God and the relation of the Jews and Gentiles to him. The same can be said for the argument of Romans 4, but with these passages one might want to argue that Paul speaks only about those before the Christ event so that Christology would be misplaced. However, Rom.3:21-31, Rom.4:24-25, and Romans 5 onwards are also theocentric for God is said to be the one who justifies (Rom.3:26+30), he is thanked (Rom.1:8; 7:25), with him we have peace (Rom.5:1), it is his righteousness that is being revealed (Rom.1:17; 3:21-22, 25), and he has shown us his love (Rom.5:8). Romans is thus indeed mainly theocentric.

Furthermore, it is true that the context does not indicate that Christ is the object of faith. The immediate context of Rom.3:22+26 is rather concerned to argue that *God* has now revealed his righteousness through Jesus Christ's deed, so that all can be justified freely as a gift by grace (Rom.3:21-26). This justification is not by 'works of the law', but by faith in God, who is the God of Jew and Gentile. This faith fulfils the law, so that the law is not nullified but upheld (Rom.3:27-31). Furthermore, the remote context (Romans 1-4) supports our claim, for in it Paul builds up the argument that no one, neither Jew nor Gentile before and after the Christ event, can be justified by the law or its works for all have sinned. In Rom.3:21-26, then, Paul presents the solution to the problem, the justification by faith made possible by Christ's deed. This faith is then further explained by the example of Abraham in Romans 4. The context does, therefore, not support the idea of Christ as the object of faith in its normal full sense that he is to be trusted and obeyed. The context rather defends our claim that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ denotes here the submission under and the acceptance of the justification made possible by God through Christ. Our claim is, therefore, supported from the given context and Paul's general focus on God rather than on Christ.

One might want to argue that such a loaded phrase like πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ could never be restricted to a certain meaning. However, that Paul is mainly speaking about the functional aspects of the Christology, the context, and the theocentric rather than Christocentric language point to our conclusion. It may at least be said that even if the idea of Christ as the object of faith were included in

πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Paul is certainly focusing on its meaning as the acceptance of the justification made possible by God through Christ.

Before we discuss what influence our interpretation could have on the interpretation of Rom.3:22, we shall take a brief look at Gal.2:16 to see if it contradicts our interpretation. In Gal.2:16 Paul parallels the thought of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ with ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν.<sup>164</sup> The language in Galatians is much more Christocentric, as shown for example by Gal.2:20, suggesting that our conclusion for Rom.3:22+26 is not applicable to Galatians. Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ like ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν should, therefore, be understood in the full sense of 'having faith in Christ', as trust in, commitment and obedience to Jesus. However, that πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ has its 'normal' full sense here allows no inference for our text in Rom.3:22, for the historical setting and the purpose of writing is different to Romans. This opens the question that we will treat in our next section, why Paul possibly uses such theocentric instead of Christocentric language.

It remains for us to discuss the meaning of Rom.3:22 when πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is taken to be an objective genitive, meaning the acceptance of the fact that God has provided with Christ Jesus the necessary atonement that made justification by faith possible for all. In our discussion of the efficacy of the Christ event we have suggested that possibly even those before the Christ event are included in the phrase εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας. Having discussed the meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ this becomes a reasonable option. It is obviously not possible that those before the Christ event could trust in or be committed to Christ. Nor could they directly accept the fact that God in Christ Jesus expiated for all, but their faith could have consisted in the hope in God's grace that he would provide the necessary means for their justification. This could account for Paul's lack of Christocentric language in Romans in general and the idea of 'faith in Christ' in such a restricted sense here in Rom.3:22.<sup>165</sup> If our interpretation is correct, those in the time before the Christ event have had 'faith in Jesus' by trusting God that he would provide the means for their justification (cf. Lk.10:24; Jh.8:56; Heb.11:13+39; 1.Pet.10-12). Such 'indirect'

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<sup>164</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.167.

<sup>165</sup> See 'Faith in God' p.83-93 below.



faith in Christ does not necessarily need to know him. Christ was not their direct object of faith.

That such an interpretation of Rom.3:22 is not going far beyond the evidence is shown by Rom.4:5-8 and the example of Abraham and David. Here we have Abraham an ἄσεβής (Rom.4:5, cf. Rom.5:6), and David a sinner (Rom.4:6-8). That Paul calls Abraham ἄσεβής ('ungodly') means more than just being without the law. It means that Abraham was a Gentile and sinner.<sup>166</sup> David and Abraham were both sinners and both trusted God that he would in spite of their sin and apart from any 'work of the law' forgive and justify them by grace.<sup>167</sup> By trusting God while still being sinners, a Jew and a Gentile knowingly or unknowingly trusted God that he would provide the means for their justification.<sup>168</sup> According to Paul's argument did both know that God is righteous and that sins can not simply be forgotten (Rom.1:18-22, 32; Rom.2:15; Rom.3:19-20),<sup>169</sup> and that therefore atonement for their sins was needed. Rom.4:5-8 thus confirms our claim that those before the Christ event had 'faith in Christ Jesus' by trusting God that he would provide the necessary means for their justification. Such an interpretation is not ruled out by the φανερώω of Rom.3:21 if, as we have argued earlier, this righteousness has been present before the Christ event and is not something new but is only revealed with the Christ event. And even if one could not agree to a restricted sense of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Rom.3:22, it is certainly true that those having faith in the time prior to the Christ event had knowingly or unknowingly a restricted 'faith in Christ' as described above.

In summary it may be said that the phrase πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is not a subjective but objective genitive with the meaning of 'having faith in Jesus Christ'. 'Faith in Christ' usually denotes trust in, commitment and obedience to Christ, but in Rom.3:22+26 its meaning is rather restricted to its functional aspects and denotes the acceptance of the fact that God in Christ has atoned for the sins of all through which all may be justified, whereby the emphasis is on God and not on Christ's deed. Such

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<sup>166</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.150; Dunn, *Romans*, p.204f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.138.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.262f.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.104.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.183.

a reading is mainly supported by the context and the theocentricity of Romans. The inference drawn from this is that Rom.3:22 can be interpreted to address Jew and Gentile before and after the Christ event, for all were and are meant to trust God that he would and has provided the means for their justification.

The interpretation of Rom.1:16-17 does not contradict, but rather supports such a claim for it contains universal language which is applicable to the time before and after the Christ event. The Gospel, denoting the fact that Christ has come and atoned for the sins of humankind, so that all can be justified by faith, is the power for the eschatological salvation for everyone. This remains intelligible even if the idea of 'faith in Christ' is contained in the Gospel, for it could be understood in the restricted sense of Rom.3:22 so that the functional aspects of the Gospel would be what Paul wants to express. The other option is that the Gospel contains the idea of 'faith in Christ' in the full sense of trust in, commitment and obedience to Christ. In that case the Gospel could contain with it the explanation that those before the Christ event were justified by their faith in God and afterwards by their faith in Christ, for direct faith in Christ was obviously not possible before the Christ event.

The Christology in Romans 1-4 is thus the basis for the justification by faith in the time before and after the Christ event. Paul argues that Christ's deed is efficacious for all at all times by being the atonement of the sins of all so that through it all may be justified by faith. Christ has, therefore, the right to be the eschatological judge of all. However, even though Christ has through his sacrificial death made the justification of all possible, he is known but not presented as the direct object of faith in the full sense as in other Pauline literature. Paul's purpose may have been to show that the Christ event was efficient also for those before it and that they were justified by their faith in it.

### **Faith in God**

We have argued in the previous section that Romans 1-4 is more theocentric than Christocentric. From this we have argued for a restricted sense of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. With our discussion of this phrase it became obvious that Paul was more

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<sup>169</sup> See 'The Gentiles, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith' p.52-58

interested in the functional aspects of the Christ event in Romans 1-4 than with the personal relationship to Christ. This is but one of the differences to Galatians. We will now take a brief look at other features in Romans 4 that are distinct and different to Galatians 3, which will raise the question why the 'faith'-language of Romans is so distinct and what the implications are for our subject. We will discuss these questions by looking at crucial passages after the comparison of Romans 4 and Galatians 3.

### ***Romans 4 and Galatians 3***

In both Romans 4 and Galatians 3 Paul uses Abraham to illustrate his position towards faith, the law, and its works. For this reason a comparison of the two will help us to specify the distinctive character of Romans 4.

In Galatians 3 an obvious difference to Romans 4 is that in Rom.4:13 the σπέρμα is not interpreted Christologically as in Gal.3:16+19.<sup>170</sup> In Romans seed and descendant of Abraham is the one who has faith (Rom.4:11-13) and in Galatians it is first of all Christ and only secondary those 'who are Christ's' (Gal.3:29). Since Paul interprets Gen.12:7; 13:15; 17:7, 8; 24:7 as referring first of all to Christ, the promise could only be fulfilled through him (Gal.3:19). This basic premise asks, therefore, for a corresponding interpretation of the law. It is for Paul in Galatians a guardian, a disciplinarian who imprisoned 'until faith would be revealed' (Gal.3:23-24).<sup>171</sup> That the law is only temporal until Christ's coming and that the promise of the seed is interpreted to refer to Christ make the language of Paul automatically much more Christocentric and focused on the Christ event. In contrast to Galatians, Paul in Romans identifies the believers as the seed of Abraham rather than Christ, so that the seed is not focused on Christ and his deed, but rather on the issue of faith. This form of argumentation allows Paul to argue for the concept of justification by faith for Jew and Gentile before the Christ event.<sup>172</sup> In Galatians this can be detected too, but such

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above.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, p.212; Longenecker; *Galatians*, p.129f.

<sup>171</sup> Another often noted difference of argumentation in relation to the law is that in Galatians Paul argues that the law came four hundred thirty years after the giving of the promise (Gal.3:17) and in Romans he refers to the much earlier work of the law, circumcision, which came likewise after the promise (Rom.4:10-11).

<sup>172</sup> See 'The Law and Faith before the Christ Event' p.35-58 above.

a view is not as clearly expressed as in Romans. Paul clearly attributes faith to Abraham and the Jews before the Christ event (Gal.3:6-7), but Gal. 3:8+14 seems to indicate that the Gentiles are only said to be included after the Christ event and not before. However, if one takes a closer look and interprets Gal.3:8 from Abraham's position rather than Paul's, Gentiles before the Christ event could have been justified before the Christ event as the πάντα indicates. In Gal.3:14 the ἵνα refers not to a chronological structure, but explains the purpose of the Christ event, that it is the basis for Jews as well as Gentiles to be justified by faith throughout history. One very sharp difference with Romans is that in Galatians Paul rejects the notion of Jew and Gentile, saying that all are one (Gal.3:28). This oneness is rooted in Christ Jesus, for all who belong to Christ are the seed of Abraham (Gal.3:29). Romans, on the other hand, maintains the distinction between Jew and Gentile (Rom.4:11-12, cf. especially Romans 11) even though both are said to be justified by faith.

These differences between Galatians 3 and Romans 4 make Romans more interesting for our discussion. In Galatians Paul's language is focused on Christ as the promised seed of Abraham, making Paul's argument Christocentric right from the beginning. Furthermore, he uses *only* 'faith in Christ'-language (Rom.3:14, 22, 26). There is no mention of 'faith in God'-language. The opposite can be said about Romans. Paul uses the term 'seed' to denote all who believe both before and after the Christ event, Jew and Gentile, rather than Christ, so that his argument is not necessarily Christocentric. On the contrary, he argues theocentrically, avoiding altogether the 'faith in Christ'-language in Romans 4, using it only in a restricted sense in Romans only in chapter 3.<sup>173</sup>

The reasons for and implications of Paul's emphasis on 'faith in God'-language in Romans 4 and his action in history have yet to be discussed. One might want to ask whether Paul is arguing that one should have faith in God rather than faith in Christ to be justified. Another option would be that Paul is only using the 'faith in God'-language for historical reasons. The following section will try to clarify the reasons for Paul's use of the 'faith in God'-language and to determine the soteriological role or position of God in Romans 4.

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<sup>173</sup> Cf. Beker, *Sieg*, p.46-53; Wieser, *Abrahamvorstellungen*, p.66-67 for a detailed comparison of Romans 4 and Galatians 3.

### *Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language*

We will begin our discussion with a closer look at Rom.4:24. It is interesting to note that some scholars do not treat this verse at all<sup>174</sup> and others only very briefly and thereby neglect to discuss the 'faith in God'-language.<sup>175</sup> Most scholars discuss the parallel character of the Christian faith to that of Abraham's, that it is faith in the same God.<sup>176</sup> In this context it is mentioned that Rom.4:25 is an early Christian kerygmatic formula, which might begin with Rom.4:24c.

It is important to note that Paul is able to express the faith of the time after the Christ event in terms of 'faith in God'. It is certainly true that Paul uses such language in order to compare Abraham's faith with that of the Christian's, but is it not the 'faith in Christ' that justifies (cf. Rom.3:26; Gal.3)? Furthermore, how can Paul define justifying faith in general terms without reference to Christ at all as he does in Rom.4:5-8? Scholars have interpreted Rom.4:24b (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν) roughly in two ways. They have argued that (1) Rom.4:24 asks for faith in Christ's resurrection<sup>177</sup> or (2) that Paul uses 'faith in God'-language here only for purposes of comparison, to compare Abraham's and the Christian's faith.<sup>178</sup> However, Rom.4:25 suggests another interpretation.

The translation of Rom.4:25, being part of an early Christian formula (cf. Rom.8:32; Gal.2:20; Eph.5:2, 25) and influenced by Isa.52:13-53:12, is unproblematic apart from slight disagreements on the two occurrences of the preposition διὰ and the ambiguity of παραδίδωμι. The first διὰ is understood by several scholars to be causal ('because of his trespasses') and the second as final ('for the sake of our justification').<sup>179</sup> Zeller argues that it is final both times.<sup>180</sup> However,

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<sup>174</sup> E.g. Bruce, *Romans*, p.112.

<sup>175</sup> E.g. Krimmer, *Römerbrief*, p.132f.; Mounce, *Romans*, p.131; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.96; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.147f.

<sup>176</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.135f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277f.

<sup>177</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.135f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.147; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277; Wieser, *Abrahamvorstellungen*, p.65.

<sup>178</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.239f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121.

<sup>179</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.224f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.96f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.122; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.278f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.193f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.136f.

<sup>180</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.104, cf. Jeremias, *Gedankenführung*, p.58.

Cranfield rightly notes that "what was necessitated by our sins was, in the first place, Christ's atoning death, and yet, had His death not been followed by His resurrection, it would not have been God's mighty deed for our justification."<sup>181</sup> The first διό should, therefore, be understood to be causal, but such distinction between Christ's death and resurrection cannot go any further for both were necessary for our justification. The passive voice of παραδίδωμι is ambiguous for it could refer to God or Judas. Being an early Christian formula it might have been understood sometimes in one or other sense or even both, but in the given context with its strong theocentric language the one who is meant to have handed Christ over to death is clearly God (cf. Rom.8:32).

The sense of Rom.4:25 is, consequently, that God handed Christ over to death because of our sins and raised him for our justification. All God did in Christ was for our justification. Paul has shown clearly the sinfulness of all in Rom.1:18-3:20 and that no one can be justified by the 'works of the law'. The sacrificial death of Christ was thus necessary to atone for our sins (cf. Rom.3:23-25) and with the resurrection of Jesus our justification was made possible. The main thrust of Rom.4:25 is thus concerned with the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection; it was *for our justification*.

That Rom.4:25 is to be seen as clarifying or explanatory of Rom.4:24c ('who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead') is usually not recognised. Rom.4:24c is usually said to be preparatory for Rom.4:25.<sup>182</sup> However, who this Jesus is and more importantly why God raised him from the dead is stated in Rom.4:25.<sup>183</sup> Jesus is the one who died because of our sins and was raised for our justification. Our sins and our justification are the reasons why God raised Jesus. God has shown that he is able to raise the dead with Christ's resurrection, but the emphasis is on its purpose. Why did God raise Christ (Rom.4:24c)? For our justification (Rom.4:25). Rom.4:24c and Rom.4:25 thus necessarily belong together for Rom.4:25 is explanatory of Rom.4:24. If then Rom.4:25 explains the statement of Rom.4:24c, we suggest that Rom.4:24 should be interpreted as saying that humankind is indeed to have the same kind of

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<sup>181</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.97.

<sup>182</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.96.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.193; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.136.

faith as Abraham, but it also ought to have faith in God who provided the means for our justification.

Such an interpretation is supported by Rom.4:5-8 and Paul's argument of Rom.4:16-22. We have already glanced at Rom.4:5-8 stating that Abraham and David trusted God that he would justify them by grace in spite of their sins and apart from any 'work of the law'.<sup>184</sup> Rom.4:5 being held general in address (it is not limited to Jew or Gentile) is how Paul defines faith. It is not so much the fact that Paul states that Abraham was a Gentile and sinner that is difficult for the Jewish mind to accept,<sup>185</sup> but the fact that Paul makes it a general principle referring to all humankind.<sup>186</sup> Having faith in God they trusted him knowingly or not that he would atone for their sins, which he has done in Christ Jesus.<sup>187</sup> Faith in God is, therefore, a complete surrender to God and his grace, a trust that he can justify sinners by providing the necessary means, which he has done with Christ. This is how faith is defined in Rom.4:5-8 and in Rom.4:16-22 Paul explains further *the nature of Abraham's faith*, how strong his trust was.

First, we note that Paul is not in any sense speaking about trust in a God who can justify the ungodly in Rom.4:16-22 as in Rom.4:5-8, but about Abraham who was justified because of the faith or trust he showed when God gave him the promise of the son. This could be understood as a contradiction of what Paul is stating about faith. However, it was not because of Abraham's faith and trust that God would give him the son that he was justified, but because of the *kind of* trust he expressed towards God in his situation. This trust was "a faith which was nothing more than naked trust in the power of the creator."<sup>188</sup> It was unconditional trust in God's unending power and truthfulness that gave Abraham hope beyond any human condition. Such faith is justifying faith. Having made this point, Paul moves on to his next statement that such faith in God is required for our justification too. However, it

<sup>184</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.72-83 above.

<sup>185</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263.

<sup>186</sup> Zeller, *Römer*, p.100; Dunn, *Romans*, p.228f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.124f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.138; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.104f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.375; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263.

<sup>187</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.72-83 above; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.183.

is said by some scholars our faith is a faith that looks backward.<sup>189</sup> It is a faith that trusts that God is able to and has raised Jesus from the dead and has thus proven his power over the death. "Wir glauben an den in Jesus Christus enthüllten Sieg Gottes über den Tod, in dem er seine δύναντις konkret bestätigt hat."<sup>190</sup> It is a faith that is focused on Christ's resurrection.<sup>191</sup> Two things must be noted in response to such an interpretation. Firstly, in Rom.4:24-25 it is not said that we should have faith in God that he can and has raised Jesus from the dead and has thus proven his power over death, or that we ought to believe in Christ's resurrection, but that we should have faith in God who has done so!<sup>192</sup> And secondly, from our previous consideration of the explanatory character of Rom.4:25 we can infer that God has done so *for our justification*. What Paul is saying, therefore, is that we should have faith in God like Abraham. This faith is a faith that trusts God that he can even raise the dead and it is a faith that trusts that God provides the means for our justification, as indeed he has done with Christ's atoning death.

It is very interesting to observe that there is not even a hint that one has to be aware of the Christ event or that one ought to have faith in Christ or in his deed in Rom.4:24-25. The Christ event is only referred to for functional reasons, namely that the Christ event was for our justification. Dunn is probably correct when he argues that Paul uses such language in order to compare Abraham's faith to ours.<sup>193</sup> However, if πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom.3:26) is been understood in our proposed sense 'faith in God' and 'faith in Christ' are not necessarily the same thing as Dunn proceeds to argue.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, solely the fact that Paul can express justifying faith in these terms points to an option that has usually been neglected. That Paul is able to formulate Rom.4:24 theocentrically shows that justification by faith does not necessarily need knowledge of the Christ event to be soteriologically efficient. To press this point any further, for example to state that 'faith in God' rather than 'faith

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<sup>188</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.239; cf. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.147; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.95; Zeller, *Römer*, p.103; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.118.

<sup>189</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.136; Zeller, *Römer*, p.104; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388.

<sup>190</sup> Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.136.

<sup>191</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121.

<sup>193</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.223f.



in Christ' in general is what justifies, would go far beyond Paul's general Christology as expressed, for example, in Galatians 3. Justification without Christology is impossible, simply because through Christ the sins of humankind were atoned for. Furthermore, he is Lord, Christ, and God's Son with all their given implications. Yet, Paul does state that one *can* be justified without any knowledge of Christ and his deed. This can not separate theology from Christology, but here in Romans, for reasons we have not discussed yet, justifying faith is focused on God and what he can and has done to make the justification possible.

Paul's theocentric language in Rom.4:24-25 might be for comparative reasons, but the theocentric language in the overall picture of Romans asks for another explanation. We are aware of three main purposes for writing; Paul's missionary enterprise to Spain; his visit to Jerusalem; and internal conflicts in the Roman congregation.<sup>195</sup> His journey to Spain has certainly not made him use theocentric language, but his visit to Jerusalem and the internal problem in Rome could have played a part. It is possible that he wanted to demonstrate the continuity to the Jewish monotheism, which would also explain why he refers back to Abraham in whom the Jewish nation was founded and other fundamentally Jewish claims (e.g. Rom.3:30, the Sch<sup>e</sup>ma). It might even be possible that some of the Roman congregation were too Christocentric rejecting their Jewish roots, which Paul tries to correct in order to unite them with those who held a strong Jewish view. It is also possible that Paul argues theocentrically because he is using the language of some Judaizers in order to convince them that his position is intelligible even with their language. It could be that the Romans were taught the way Paul writes, with a theocentric view of the Christ event, so that he does not want to lose them and their support by writing differently. Having listed some possible reasons, it becomes obvious that we cannot be sure which of these is the correct one or if it was a mixture of some that made Paul formulate Romans as he did.<sup>196</sup> Our inability to find the reason must make us even more cautious to be too quick to generalise some of his statements. However, our argument above remains valid, for the recipients would have understood Paul theocentrically when he wrote theocentrically. This means that when Paul writes that

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<sup>194</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.224.

<sup>195</sup> See 'The historical Context' p.21-26 above.

one is justified by 'faith in God', the Romans not having the rest of the New Testament scriptures at hand (for most of them had not been written yet) would not understand it differently. They would not necessarily understand 'faith in God' to be the same as 'faith in Christ' automatically, even if it was the same for Paul. This is especially true if our proposed interpretation of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ for Rom.3:22+26 is correct<sup>197</sup> and if the Romans had a theocentric view of the Christ event. 'Faith in God' is thus an expression used by Paul that can be understood apart from 'faith in Christ', and yet having soteriological efficacy.

The next passage to be looked at is Rom.3:27-31. We have shown earlier that the argumentation of this passage is applicable to those before the Christ event as well as to those after, because the premises used by Paul were and are true before and after.<sup>198</sup> Paul uses πίστις in this passage without a qualifier like 'in Christ' or 'in God', so that it is possible that it could mean either. From the near context, Rom.3:22+26, one could infer that 'faith in Christ' is intended, but this would make this passage applicable only to the time after the Christ event if it is understood in the traditional sense, which we have rejected earlier. It must therefore refer to either 'faith in Christ' as we understand it or to 'faith in God'. The option that it refers to 'faith in God' is supported by the theocentric language, for God is said to be the one who justifies (Rom.3:26+30), he is the God of Jew and Gentile (Rom.3:29), and he is one (Rom.3:30).<sup>199</sup> All is focused on God. It seems more plausible, therefore, to take πίστις as referring to 'faith in God'. However, even if one prefers to think in terms of 'faith in Christ', with our proposed interpretation of it, God is still the object of faith, for 'faith in Christ' denotes an aspect of 'faith in God'. 'Faith in Christ' is faith in God that *he* has provided the necessary means with Christ's expiating death for the justification of humankind.<sup>200</sup> We conclude that this passage has God as the object of

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Moxnes, *Theology*, 13-99 for a discussion of possible solutions.

<sup>197</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.72-83 above.

<sup>198</sup> See 'The Gentiles and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event' p.48-51 above.

<sup>199</sup> If this being one of God includes Christ for Paul is an interesting question and might add some further information to our subject, but that would go beyond the space of the thesis. Cf. Deut.6:4; 1.Cor.8:4; 1.Tim.2:5-6; Klumbies, *Der Eine Gott des Paulus*, p.192-206.

<sup>200</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.72-83 above.

faith. It thus backs our claim that faith in God apart from any Christological knowledge is possible, for Paul again argues here that one is justified by his faith in God.

If our interpretation for πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is accepted, the same argument may be applied to Rom.3:22+26. 'Faith in Christ' denotes an aspect of 'faith in God'. It is trust in God for the provision for one's justification. Thus Rom.3:22+26 also express that God is the object of faith. On the basis of this assumption we have been able to argue earlier that Rom.3:22 could be applied also to those before the Christ event who had no knowledge of Christ and his deed. We have said that this is possible since the 'faith in Christ'-language in Rom.3:22+26 asks solely for trust in the provision of God for the justification of humankind. From our considerations of Paul's 'faith in God'-language, we can now also state that those *after* the Christ event who have no knowledge of Christ and his deed can be justified, for the argument we used to include those before the Christ event is applicable likewise to those after the Christ event. What is required from them is faith in God as the God who is able to do all, even raise the dead, and trust that he is able to wipe out the sins that one has committed. Such an interpretation fits in well with Paul's idea of the righteousness of God for all humankind.

Before we conclude this part, it should be noted briefly that even if one does not accept the proposed interpretation of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ but prefers to think of it in the full traditional sense in Rom.3:22, 26, and thinks that πίστις in Rom.3:27-31 refers to 'faith in Christ', our argumentation still remains valid. The argument might then fail for Rom.3:22, 26, 26-31, but the fact that Paul can use 'faith in God'-language in Rom.4:5+24 alone indicates that justification apart from 'faith in Christ' in its traditional sense or any knowledge of the Christ event is possible.

We conclude, therefore, that we do not know why Paul uses theocentric language and the 'faith in God'-language, but we do know that his language in Rom.4:24 is not expressing the idea that one ought to believe that Christ was raised from the dead. Paul rather argues that humankind should have the same faith like Abraham, faith in God. This faith is a faith which trusts that God is even able to raise the dead, but it is also a faith which believes that God in Christ has provided the means for the justification of humankind. This latter idea is especially expressed by

Rom.4:24c and Rom.4:25 as its explanation. That Paul is not using theocentric faith language only for comparative reasons is supported by Rom.4:5-8 where Paul defines in general terms 'faith in God' as a complete surrender to God and his grace, a trust that he can justify sinners by providing the necessary means. From these considerations one may infer that after the Christ event, justifying faith can have God as the object of faith like Abraham had without any knowledge of Christ and his atoning deed.

This interpretation is supported by Paul's 'faith in Christ'-language in Rom.3:22+26, which expresses trust that God has provided the necessary means for the justification of humankind. 'Faith in Christ' is, therefore, trust or faith in God and his atoning deed through Christ Jesus. Such faith in God was possible before the Christ event and likewise afterwards. Hence, Rom.3:22+26 strengthen our claim that, on the one hand, one can be justified apart from any knowledge of the Christ event, but on the other hand, that only through the Christ event justification is made possible.

#### ABRAHAM AS THE REFLECTION OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT ABOUT FAITH

Having discussed the significance of Paul's argument about 'faith/having faith', we will now move on to discuss how this is reflected in Romans 4 in the case of Abraham. So far we have tried to avoid a too thorough exegesis of Romans 4; but even now, however, we will not discuss whether he is understood by Paul as a model.<sup>201</sup> The point of interest rather is the extent to which the argument of Rom.1:18-3:31 and 4:24-25 is reflected in Paul's treatment of Abraham.

#### Preliminaries

##### *The Purpose of Paul's use of Abraham*

The first issue to be discussed is how Abraham functions in Paul's argument. Does Paul attempt (1) to provide a scriptural proof that the revealed justification is attested by the Old Testament (Rom.3:21),<sup>202</sup> or does he argue (2) that the law is

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<sup>201</sup> See 'Paul's use of Abraham – a Model?' p.106-121 below.

<sup>202</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.134f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.85; Dunn, *Romans*, p.177; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.369; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.121; Zeller, *Römer*, p.96; Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.141.

upheld (Rom.3:31),<sup>203</sup> (3) that boasting is excluded since justification is not by the 'works of the law' but by faith (Rom.3:27-28),<sup>204</sup> (4) that Jew and Gentile are justified alike (Rom.3:29-30),<sup>205</sup> (5) that Gentiles are included among God's people (which is the view of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach of Romans 4),<sup>206</sup> or (6) that Abraham is in some way an example, model, or type of one having faith (which is held by most scholars except e.g. by those of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach)? Several scholars argue for more than one of these purposes of writing for Romans 4, which suggests that these options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. We will now discuss these further, but the last two options will be treated in detail in the next section because they seem more immediately concerned with Abraham's role as a model.

The first issue is the translation of Rom.4:1, which has been rendered as 'What then shall we say? Have we found Abraham to be our forefather according to the flesh?'<sup>207</sup> or 'What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found?'<sup>208</sup> Since there are several textual variants and the meaning of each is difficult, Bultmann called this verse *heillos verdorben*.<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, the two given translations certainly represent the best solutions.<sup>210</sup> Hays is in favour of the first translation. He compares the τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν with its other occurrences in Rom.3:5; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14; 9:30, making the observation that it is always a complete sentence which introduces another rhetorical question, whereby the

<sup>203</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.258; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.369f.; Gager, *Origins*, p.218; Hays, *Abraham*, p.92.

<sup>204</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.217-220; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.81; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.100; Dunn, *Romans*, p.225; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.258; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.369f.; Zeller, *Römer*, p.96.

<sup>205</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.83ff.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.135; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.258; Zeller, *Römer*, p.97.

<sup>206</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.243; Gager, *Origins*, p.218f.; Gaston, *Torah*, p.123; Cranford, *Abraham*, p.73; Sutherland, *Gen.15:6*, p.178f.

<sup>207</sup> Zahn, *Römer*, p.212-219; Hays, *Abraham*, p.76ff., who were followed by Gaston, *Torah*, p.124f.; Cranford, *Abraham*, p.74f.

<sup>208</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.198f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.83; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.135; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.371f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.261; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.100; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.67.

<sup>209</sup> Bultmann, S.v. *καυχάσθαι*, p.649.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.260f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.371 for a detailed discussion of all the different Greek variants.

rhetorical question draws an inference from the foregoing discussion (cf. Rom.3:9; 6:15; 11:7; 1.Cor.10:19). This inference is usually false.<sup>211</sup> This observation would suggest two sentences for Rom.4:1. However, such rendering of Rom.4:1 appears only in secondary and later manuscripts and the use of εὐρίσκειν with no expressed object does not occur in the entire New Testament. Furthermore, why should Paul use a perfect instead of an aorist infinitive? Hays argues, therefore, that Ἀβραάμ is not the subject but the direct object of εὐρηκέναι and the 'we' the subject of it, so that a translation like the one given above is possible.<sup>212</sup> Such a translation of Rom.4:1 is also supported by the usage of εὐρίσκειν in Rom.7:10+21, referring to the 'findings' of a discussion or inquiry. Furthermore, this reading of Rom.4:1 echoes a common rabbinic exegetical idiom (מִה מְצִינֵנוּ בִּי) and its usage of 'find' (מִצָּה), which means 'to draw a conclusion on the basis of exegetical evidence'.<sup>213</sup> Finally, the perfect infinitive (in a question 'what we found Abraham to be') is given an intelligible function against the other possible translation, where an aorist infinitive should be expected (for the question 'what Abraham found').<sup>214</sup>

Dunn, who is a proponent of the second option, argues instead that it seems more natural to take Ἀβραάμ as the subject of εὐρηκέναι, for the attention is focused on Abraham who was generally accepted as a decisive test case.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, familiar language about Abraham is thus echoed and the antithesis of grace versus works is introduced. The parallels referred to by Hays (e.g. Rom.8:31; 9:30) do not necessarily show how Rom.4:1 should be translated, so that Hays' comparison must not have any bearing on the translation of Rom.4:1. Finally, "the beginning of a sentence with an accusative and infinitive construction where the accusative was unstated would be rather odd."<sup>216</sup> Stowers, moreover, notes that Hays understands κατὰ σάρκα as 'physical descent'.<sup>217</sup> The issue is not whether only those who are of physical descent can be made righteous. It is rather the question whether

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<sup>211</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.78f.

<sup>212</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.81.

<sup>213</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.82.

<sup>214</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.83.

<sup>215</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.199.

<sup>216</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.199.

<sup>217</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.242.

Gentiles can enter into a right relation with God by doing 'works of the law', which is said to be clearly the issue of the immediate context (Rom.3:27f.).

Both proposed options carry certain weight with respect to the purpose of Romans 4, but the argument that the immediate context should determine the meaning of Rom.4:1 is among all the other arguments the most convincing. Even Hays himself has difficulty explaining the sudden appearance of the subject of his question<sup>218</sup> and does not explain how Rom.4:2-8 fits his interpretation.<sup>219</sup> We do, therefore, prefer 'What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found?' as the proper translation of Rom.4:1.

The implications for the purpose of writing Romans 4 have to be discussed next. Hays' translation suggests that Romans 4 tries mainly to address the question whether or not only those who are of physical descent are the seed of Abraham.<sup>220</sup> However, since we have rejected his translation and opted for the other, we have to ask what Abraham found according to Paul in Rom.4:1. It has been suggested that he found 'grace', which is supported by the frequent use of εὐρηκέναι together with χάρις in the LXX (cf. especially Gen.18:3) to which Paul refers in Rom.4:4+16.<sup>221</sup> Another option to interpret the translation of Rom.4:1 is that Paul simply asks 'What did Abraham find to be the case', i.e. when he first found favour with God.<sup>222</sup> More likely is, however, that Paul had Sir 44:20 and 1.Macc.2:52 in mind as the answer to the question of Rom.4:1 ('when he was tested he was found faithful, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness').<sup>223</sup> All three given interpretations raise the problem of whether Abraham was reckoned righteous because he was faithful in doing certain works or because of his faith by grace. The main purpose of Romans 4 is, therefore, to discuss this matter, using Abraham as a test-case of Paul's thesis. By referring to Abraham Paul certainly gives the (necessary) scriptural proof that the revealed righteousness is attested by the Old Testament (Rom.3:21) and explains further why boasting is excluded (Rom.3:27). Furthermore, his argument about faith and 'works of the law' comes again to the point where he defines the true seed of

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<sup>218</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.86f.

<sup>219</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.89ff.

<sup>220</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.83ff.

<sup>221</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.198; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.261; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.100.

<sup>222</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.198.

Abraham, which are the ones having faith, circumcised or not (Rom.4:11b-12, 16). Hays' understanding of the function of chapter 4 has, therefore, its place, but this or the other are not the main issues but some of those implications drawn from his argument about faith.

We may conclude that Paul's main purpose is to discuss the relation of justification to faith and works further. This purpose of writing determines Paul's form of argumentation and already reveals to some extent what Paul's discussion of Abraham reflects concerning the significance of faith.

### *A Classification of Abraham*

Before discussing Romans 4 in greater detail, we will have to classify Abraham, asking what kind of person he was, a Jew or Gentile. The traditional Jewish position is that Abraham was aware of the requirements of the law (e.g. 1.Macc.2:52; Sir 44:20; Jub. 15).<sup>224</sup> He is said to be the first Jew to have been loyal and obedient to God's command. This faithfulness of Abraham in his deeds (e.g. his sacrifice of Isaac) was the cause for his justification.<sup>225</sup> Paul, however, tries to establish another point, namely, the justification by faith apart from the requirements of the law (Rom.3:21; 4:4-6). Contrary to the common Jewish position Paul claims that Abraham was ἀσεβῆς (Rom.4:5; cf. Rom.5:6). We have already drawn some conclusions from this statement,<sup>226</sup> but at the moment we are only interested in the fact that this attribute suggests Paul understood him as the virtual equivalent of a Gentile and a sinner.<sup>227</sup> Only after his circumcision did he become the first Jew and the progenitor of the circumcised (Rom.4:1), but before his circumcision he was a Gentile. Since he obviously lived before the Christ event, he has, therefore, to be classified among those Gentiles which Paul describes in Rom.2:6-16, 26-29. Klein, being aware of this, did claim that Abraham's faith was exceptional,<sup>228</sup> but this view

<sup>223</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.198.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Zeller, *Römer*, p.98f.

<sup>225</sup> We note here that πίστις (Gen.15:6) has been understood as 'faithfulness'. For a fuller exposition of the Jewish view cf. Kittel, S.v. πιστεύω, p.199ff.

<sup>226</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.82-82 above.

<sup>227</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.150; Dunn, *Romans*, p.204f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.138.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.262f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86.

<sup>228</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.155.



cannot explain why only Abraham should have been justified and nobody else.<sup>229</sup> Abraham was, therefore, truly justified like those after the Christ event and is an example given by Paul that even the Gentiles could be justified before the Christ event.

### **Faith, the Law and its Works**

We will now turn to Paul's main area of interest, the relation of justification to faith and 'works of the law', which he wants to discuss with Abraham. If Abraham was for Paul the equivalent of a Gentile before the Christ event, one may ask to which extent Abraham was aware of the law or its works. Many Jews claim that Abraham was aware of the requirements of the law (e.g. 1.Macc.2:52; Sir 44:20). Paul is in Rom.2:14-16 stating exactly the same for the Gentiles before the Christ event, which would include Abraham; it is possible that Paul even had him in mind when he wrote these verses. However, we have argued that Rom.2:14-16 is not about the outward deeds of the law, but the proper view of the law.<sup>230</sup> Since Abraham was a Gentile prior to the Christ event, he was, like any Gentile, unaware of the Torah. It is not explicitly said in Romans 4, but Rom.4:5-8 clearly supports the inference that he was aware of the proper standard of the law. He was a sinner, yet he trusted God for his justification. The fact that he knew that he was a sinner shows that the law was at work in him giving him his awareness of sin (Rom.3:20).<sup>231</sup> Paul presupposes, therefore, indeed awareness of the proper standard of the law.

Being aware of the proper standard of the law and his sinfulness, Abraham did not try to be justified by doing 'works of the law'. He trusted in God and his grace that he would justify him in spite of his sin (Rom.4:4-5).<sup>232</sup> Paul argues contrary to the common Jewish view, that Abraham was justified not on the basis of his faithfully doing required deeds, but solely on the basis of his faith (Rom.4:2-8).<sup>233</sup> Paul supports this claim in Rom.4:9-11a (cf. Gen.17:9-14): Abraham was justified

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<sup>229</sup> Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.114f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.240; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.110.

<sup>230</sup> See 'The Gentiles, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith' p.54-55 above.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.105f.

<sup>232</sup> Dobbeler, *Glaube*, p.134.

before he was physically circumcised, whereby circumcision being *the* 'work of the law' represents here certainly all the other 'works of the law'.<sup>234</sup> Justification has for Paul nothing to do with being circumcised or with any other work. As a Gentile prior to the Christ event, Abraham was, therefore, justified by faith apart from any 'work of the law'.

With Abraham Paul attempts to show that Gentiles before the Christ event could and should be justified by faith apart from 'works of the law'; however, Paul is also concerned with Jews. A true descendant of Abraham is the one who is a 'true Jew' (Rom.2:25-29). It is, as in Rom.3:26-29, not the doer of certain 'works of the law' or the physical descendant, but the one justified by faith (Rom.4:11b-12; cf. 'circumcision of the heart' Rom.2:25-29). We have discussed Rom.4:11b-12 earlier,<sup>235</sup> but it is important to note again that according to Paul even for the Jews before the Christ event circumcision carried no soteriological efficacy, but was only meant to attest to the justification by faith, i.e. to be a sign and seal of it. Paul does not reject circumcision, but maintains that justifying faith is the important matter for Jew and Gentile. Therefore, before the Christ event all were meant to be justified by faith apart from works of the law. Through Paul's use of Abraham the soteriological efficacy of the 'works of the law' prior to the Christ event is rejected.

The next issue to be discussed is whether Abraham reflects also something of Paul's argument about the relation faith to 'works of the law' for the time after the Christ event. Looking again at Rom.4:11b, we note that Paul states that 'The purpose was to make him the ancestor of *all* ...' Most scholars would apply these verses only to the Jews and Gentiles after the Christ event, or consider to include the Jews before it.<sup>236</sup> However, the opposite seems to be true.<sup>237</sup> There is no limitation to those prior to the Christ event, so that Rom.4:11b-12 speaks, first of all, about the time before Christ, but the 'all' indicates that it includes also those after the Christ event. By

<sup>233</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.85; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.105; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.262f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.205.

<sup>234</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.231; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.380.

<sup>235</sup> See 'The Law and Faith before the Christ Event' p.37-38 above.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.109; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.142; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.381; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.265; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.89; Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.155f.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.144.

claiming that a true descendant is the one who has faith like Abraham, the foregoing discussion becomes applicable to those after the Christ event as well. Moreover, those Jews and Gentiles after the Christ event who are justified by faith are Abraham's descendants. If it is faith that justifies and circumcision as representative of the 'works of the law' serves only as a seal of that justification, then 'works of the law' carry no soteriological efficacy for those after the Christ event.<sup>238</sup> With Abraham Paul rejects, therefore, the soteriological efficacy of the 'works of the law' not only for Abraham or for those before the Christ event but also for those after. One is justified before and after the Christ event by faith and becomes thus a true Jew and a descendant of Abraham.

The role of the law itself is not as thoroughly discussed in relation to Abraham as it is in Gal.3:17-25. However, we have already briefly mentioned the function of the law for Abraham to give knowledge of sin (Rom.3:20). This knowledge made him possibly aware that he was 'ungodly' (Rom.4:5). Rom.4:13-15 which may be regarded as some kind of parallel to Gal.3:17, gives some additional information about the function of the law in Abraham's life. With Rom.4:13 Paul is introducing the issue of the 'promise' (ἐπαγγελία). Paul refers here to the 'promise' as it was often understood by Jews that they would 'inherit the world', for they possessed the law and observed it.<sup>239</sup> Paul here and in Rom.4:16-17 redefines the meaning of the promise and on what basis it is being fulfilled. The promise does not rest on the possession of the law but on the righteousness of faith (Rom.4:13), for the law was not given at Abraham's time. The promise of Abraham's fatherhood of many nations (Rom.4:17) is been fulfilled in all those who like Abraham are justified by faith (Rom.4:16).<sup>240</sup> The reason given in Rom.4:14 as to why the promise does not rest on the law is that if only οἱ ἐκ νόμου are heirs, faith in general and Abraham's in particular is meaningless and likewise the promise, for it has been given to Abraham because of his faith.<sup>241</sup> Paul then states the purpose of the law (Rom.4:15). It does not

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<sup>238</sup> Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.142; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.381; Dunn, *Romans*, p.211.

<sup>239</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.233; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.269.

<sup>240</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.69f.

<sup>241</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.270; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.384f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.234f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.91.

work righteousness as thought by some Jews, but wrath (cf. Rom.1:18ff.).<sup>242</sup> The law reveals transgression (Rom.3:20) and the transgression brings humankind under condemnation. Its function is to reveal the need of humankind for God's grace, not to justify. That is the reason why the promise cannot depend on the law, neither in Abraham's case nor for his descendants (Rom.4:16). Faith is the crucial factor, so that justification depends on God's grace. This is true not only for Abraham but also for all those who like him are justified by faith, whether Jew or Gentile. Rom.4:16 has certainly in this context to be understood in the sense of Rom.4:11b-12. If τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου did refer to the physical descendants only without reference to the necessity of faith (even if it would refer to those prior to Christ),<sup>243</sup> Paul would be contradicting his previous statement about the law. Τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου refers, therefore, to those who are Abraham's physical descendants but also have faith (Rom.4:12).<sup>244</sup> Even though this passage states who is a true descendant and a partaker of the promise, it has become clear from our discussion of these verses that it is not Paul's main concern to argue this. His main concern is rather to question in which relation faith stands to the law and its works and accordingly who is justified (cf. Rom.3:29-30). Paul by defining what the promise is, who is included, and what role the law has, clearly shows that the law had no part in Abraham's justification nor does it in anyone else's.

Boasting is, therefore, excluded (Rom.3:27; 4:2; 11:18).<sup>245</sup> If Abraham were justified by works he could boast, but even then not before God. However, since it is by faith that Abraham was justified by God's grace apart from 'works of the law', boasting is excluded before God and humankind.<sup>246</sup> Again, the main purpose of Romans 4 is certainly not to explain why this boasting is excluded,<sup>247</sup> but to argue that the concept of justification by faith is only possible through God's grace

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<sup>242</sup> See 'The Purpose of the Law' p.46-47 above.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.385; Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.160f.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, p.93; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.272; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.114f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.144.

<sup>245</sup> Apart from that boasting mentioned in Rom.5:2-3, which is a boasting in ones creator (cf. 1.Cor.1:29+31) and the boasting in the received grace, thus in ones dependency on God.

<sup>246</sup> E.g. Dunn, *Romans*, p.227; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.83f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.372.

<sup>247</sup> So Gager, *Origins*, p.217-220.



revealing God's righteousness. The consequence of this argumentation is that human deeds and pride in them has no room in Paul's concept of justification.

Another issue concerning the law follows from our argument that Rom.3:31 has to be interpreted in the light of Rom.3:27.<sup>248</sup> The law is upheld, because the concept of justification fulfils the law as it was meant to be understood. This argumentation cannot be found in Romans 4. The law is quoted to confirm the concept of justification by faith (e.g. Gen.15:6, cf. Rom.3:21) and its wrath working power is maintained (Rom.4:15), but that the law is fulfilled by faith is not stated. We are, therefore, surprised to find that Wilckens who holds the position that the law is fulfilled by faith<sup>249</sup> to argue that Rom.4:13-16 is connected with Rom.3:31, which he does not even explain.<sup>250</sup> It is hard to see how he can unite his two positions. If one does not take the position that the law is upheld (Rom.3:31) by Paul's ability to use Abraham for the explanation of his concept,<sup>251</sup> Rom.3:31 receives no further explanation in Romans 4. Those of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach obviously claim that the law is upheld, because Paul shows with Abraham that the law is still valid for the Jews.<sup>252</sup> However, this option will be discussed later.<sup>253</sup>

We conclude that Paul through Abraham shows that not 'works of the law' but only faith can be efficient soteriologically. Abraham was justified only on the basis of his faith by God's grace. Circumcision as the representative of the 'works of the law' functions only as a sign and seal of the already received righteousness. Therefore, since the 'works of the law' are soteriologically meaningless, faith is the all deciding factor for the Jews as well as for the Gentiles, prior to and after the Christ event. The law itself revealed to Abraham that he is ungodly and it works in general wrath, but if the law had soteriological significance, Abraham's faith and the promise were nullified. The justification rests, therefore, on faith, so that not only the Jews but also the Gentiles can be justified by faith.

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<sup>248</sup> See 'The Gentiles and the Concept of Justification by Faith before the Christ Event' p.50-51 above.

<sup>249</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.245f.

<sup>250</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.258.

<sup>251</sup> So Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.369.

<sup>252</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.218.

<sup>253</sup> See 'Abraham used exclusively for the Inclusion of Gentiles' p.109-112 below.

## Christology

There is little Christology in Paul's use of Abraham. This may be explained by the fact that Christ could not have been his direct object of faith. However, Christ is not called the only seed of Abraham as he is in Gal.3:16. From this strange absence of Christocentric language in Romans 4, we have been trying to draw inferences for the 'faith in God'-language.<sup>254</sup> In our discussion of the Christology we have, furthermore, concluded that Christ is considered by Paul to be the one who atoned for the sins of humanity and thus made justification possible.<sup>255</sup> It is in Rom.4:5-8 that such usage can be detected even for Abraham. We do not intend to repeat our proposal, but we concluded that both Abraham and David trusted God that he would justify them in spite of their sins. God cannot simply forget sin and justify someone, so the inference is that Christ atoned for their sins even though they were a Jew and a Gentile during the time prior to the Christ event. Furthermore, especially David as a Jew but also Abraham knew that God could not simply forget their sins (Rom.1:18-22, 32; Rom.2:15; Rom.3:20), so that they knowingly or not trusted God that he would provide the necessary means for their justification.<sup>256</sup> Thus even Abraham reflects Paul's argument that Christ's atoning death is sufficient for those justified by faith before the Christ event. Abraham's justification is not a salvation historical one off, but his faith and his justification have clear links to God's atoning deed in Christ Jesus. Christ provided the means for Abraham's justification and Abraham's faith possibly included the trust in God that he would provide the means for his justification.

The general language of Rom.4:5 seems to allow an interpretation of such a kind not only for Abraham and David, but for everybody.<sup>257</sup> Rom.4:5 could, therefore, intelligible be read as 'Everyone who without works trust him who justifies the ungodly, ...'. In that case our conclusion for this passage is universally applicable. Christ atoned not only for the justification of Abraham and David, but for anyone

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<sup>254</sup> See 'Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language' p.86-93 above.

<sup>255</sup> See 'The Efficacy of the Christ Event' p.64-72 above.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.183; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.68.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.375; Dunn, *Romans*, p.228f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.105; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.138; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.262f. Zeller, *Römer*, p.100; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.124f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.

who has faith. We note again the strange absence of 'faith in Christ'-language for such a universal statement. Knowledge of the Christ event seems, therefore, not necessary for those before and after it. According to Paul, Christ's deed is, therefore, for anyone who is justified by faith the means for the justification and apart from it no one is justified by faith. However, knowledge of the Christ event itself is not needed.

In the context of our discussion of Christology and Abraham, an interpretation of the 'promise' has to be mentioned (Rom.4:13f.). This interpretation emphasises that Abraham had a future orientated faith.<sup>258</sup> It is said that the promise that he would be the father of many nations has been fulfilled in the Christ event. "Abraham hatte auf die christliche Gegenwart als geschichtliche Erfüllung der Verheißung vorzuschauen, ..." <sup>259</sup> The promise given to Abraham was thus not primarily fulfilled in the birth of his son, but in the eschatological ratification of his promise through the Christ event (cf. Gal.3:8). In this sense the description of Abraham's faith in Rom.4:17-22 is been interpreted. Abraham believed against all hope that God would justify many nations through the eschatological Christ event.<sup>260</sup> Such an interpretation is tempting if one argues for the salvation-historical continuity. However, Klein's critique is correct when he says that Abraham's faith was directed towards his physical empowerment for the birth of his physical son and not towards the Christ event as the ratification of his promise.<sup>261</sup> It was not a faith that he would be a father of many nations who are justified by faith. Abraham's faith is here concerned with the physical aspect of the promise that he would have a son even though he was about a hundred years old (Rom.4:19). It is, however, Paul who interprets anew who is a true descendant of Abraham. It is not the physical descendant but those justified by faith. The promise was, therefore, fulfilled for Abraham himself in the birth of his son, but for Paul it is fulfilled by those who are justified by faith through the redemption made possible through Christ.

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<sup>258</sup> Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.125f.; Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.144f.; cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.386.

<sup>259</sup> Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.125.

<sup>260</sup> Laymann, *Paul's use ...*, p.145.

<sup>261</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.167.

### 'Faith in God'-Language

We have just discussed Rom.4:5 and Abraham's and David's trust in God that he would justify them in spite of their sins. It would be superfluous to repeat our conclusions again. What is important is that he trusted in God, and his grace, and not in his own works.<sup>262</sup> This faith of Abraham is said to be justifying faith.

The nature of this faith is further explained in Rom.4:17-22. At first sight the sense of Rom.4:22 seems to be that the faith in God's promise of the son justified Abraham, but it was because of the *kind of faith* he had that he was justified. Abraham believed in a God who could raise the dead and create out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*; Rom.4:17; cf. 2 Macc.7:28; Jos. As. 12.2; 2 Apoc. Bar. 21.4; 48:8; 2 Enoch 24.2; Ap. Const. 8.12.7).<sup>263</sup> Paul certainly had the enabling of Abraham's and Sarah's bodies in mind with his statement about the life-giving power of God (cf. Rom.4:19). And with God's creative power, Paul seems to draw a parallel to his redemptive power (cf. 1.Cor.1:28).<sup>264</sup> The God in whom Abraham believed was thus a God of unending power, a God who is able to empower weak bodies and justify sinners. Abraham's faith did not consider the human situation as determinative, but God's word (Rom.4:18). He put his hope in God against all human hope and possibilities and did not let this hope go even though he was aware of his situation (Rom.4:19). His trust did not weaken and his faith became stronger, for he was convinced that God is able to keep his promise (Rom.4:20-21).<sup>265</sup> Abraham's faith in God was, therefore, of such a nature that he believed that God is able to do anything, whereby he did not consider human situations but God's word as the all determinative factor. This description of Abraham's faith shows that it was not faith *in what* has been promised, but *the nature of* his faith in God through which Abraham was justified.

To conclude, Abraham's faith consists of a complete surrender to God, his grace, power, and word. He trusted God even though his body was dead (Rom.4:17+19) and he trusted in God's redemptive power in spite of his sin (Rom.4:5). He thus trusted God

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<sup>262</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.104; Dunn, *Romans*, p.228f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.262f.; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.87.

<sup>263</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.217f.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.386; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.93; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.274; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.70.

<sup>264</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.274f.; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.115f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.218.



knowingly or not that he would provide the means for his justification. Abraham's example reflects well Paul's 'faith in God'-language that humankind is meant to believe in God for their justification. It might even reflect the trust in the provision of the means for their justification.

To summarise this section, we may say that in Abraham Paul has chosen an example that reflects all the basic arguments of Rom.1:18-3:31; 4:24-25. He has not only shown that the Scriptures attests to the revealed righteousness (Rom.3:21) or that boasting is excluded (Rom.3:27), but first of all his main purpose that one is justified by faith through God's grace apart from 'works of the law' (Rom.3:27-28). Since justification is solely dependent on faith all, Jew and Gentile, are justified alike, before and after the Christ event. Christ atoned for sins of humanity and thus made justification possible, but it is faith in God and the trust that he has provided the means for the justification that justifies.

#### PAUL'S USE OF ABRAHAM – A MODEL?

This section will discuss the paradigmatic function of Abraham. For a proper discussion of this subject it seems best to discuss the two groupings, those who hold that there is no salvation-historical continuity and those of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach, separately, before we discuss for whom Abraham might be a model and how Paul uses Abraham paradigmatically.

#### **Abraham, the Type of the old Aeon**

The premise that justification by faith was not possible before the Christ event made those scholars who think that there is no salvation-historical continuity argue that Abraham functions only as a type for those after the Christ event.<sup>266</sup> He himself was either not justified by faith or else he was the only one justified before the Christ event,<sup>267</sup> since the concept of justification was revealed with the Christ event (Rom.3:21), i.e. it was not present before it.<sup>268</sup> Rom.4:11b-12 are accordingly

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<sup>265</sup> Wieser, *Abrahamvorstellungen*, p.65.

<sup>266</sup> Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.138; Goppelt, *Typos*, p.164ff.

<sup>267</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.155.

<sup>268</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.148.

interpreted to refer only to Jewish and Gentile Christians.<sup>269</sup> Paul's general intention with Abraham is to approve his new concept by the Old Testament (Rom.3:21) and to show how faith ought to look like.<sup>270</sup>

For these scholars the point of comparison between Abraham and the Christians is that Abraham believed in the promise of God that he would have a son and thus become the father of many nations and the Christians believe in the God who has fulfilled his promise with the Christ event. Whereby the faith of Abraham was only focused on the promise, the faith of the Christians is focused on Christ by which they become heirs of Abraham by believing that he died for their sins. This difference between the faith of Abraham and that of the Christians is said to denote the typological increase.<sup>271</sup>

So ist Abraham Typus der aus Glauben allein gerechtfertigten Christenheit, nicht 'Typus' im profanen Sinn, musterhaftes Urbild einer Gattung, sondern im ntl Sinn, von Gott gesetztes heilsgeschichtliches Vorbild derer, an denen sich sein Gottesverhältnis auf höherer Stufe durch Christus vollendet.<sup>272</sup>

This position meanwhile has been rejected by most scholars, for several reasons. The argument that the Christians are justified by their faith in Christ and their believing that Christ died for their sins has already been discussed above. It has been shown that the faith described by Paul was *not* faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and possibly even not in the person of Christ, but in God and that he has provided the means for the justification of humankind. It is, furthermore, from this viewpoint impossible to explain why Abraham should have been the only one justified before the Christ event as claimed by Klein. Why is he the *Urbild* and not another Old Testament figure or even someone outside the Old Testament.<sup>273</sup> The only solution would be that he was not justified by faith like all the others in the time prior to the Christ event and that Paul explains with Abraham's 'faith', which is only similar to the Christian faith, how faith is meant to be. In that case it is questionable how Paul can state that God called Abraham justified if he in fact was not (Gen.15:6;

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<sup>269</sup> E.g. Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.186.

<sup>270</sup> Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.135.

<sup>271</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, p.165.

<sup>272</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, p.166.

Rom.4:3, 5, 22),<sup>274</sup> why he can explain with Abraham, who himself was not justified by faith, the concept of justification by faith and the nature of faith.

This question of how Paul can use Abraham, someone of the old aeon, to illustrate his concept of justification by faith that is said to be part of the new aeon, needs a good explanation to be convincing. Klein in an attempt to answer it has tried to argue that Paul was using Abraham on two different levels.<sup>275</sup> The first level is the timeless aspect of the example. Paul uses it to explain the structure of the justification event (Rom.4:3-8) and faith as phenomenon (Rom.4:17b-22). The second level is the historical aspect (Rom.4:9-12; 13-17a), which stands "für die in 3,27 ff. durchgeführte Indifferenzierung von Juden und Heiden, indem sie die Geschichte Israels entheiligt und paganisiert."<sup>276</sup> The question of how Paul can use Abraham is not relevant for the first level, since Paul is not using Abraham in a historical sense. The second level, however, is using Abraham historically. Paul can use Abraham historically for the second level, since he does not use Abraham to argue for salvation historical continuity but to deconstruct it to establish the concept of justification by faith for Jew and Gentile alike.

That such an argumentation is weak and unconvincing is obvious. Hays' suggestion that Abraham is not used historically for the first level would require a total disconnection on Paul's side from the historical identification with the people of Israel, especially in the context of the passages referred to by Klein (Rom.4:3-8). However, in Rom.4:1 Paul does identify himself with the Jews by calling Abraham 'our ancestor according to the flesh'.<sup>277</sup> This suggests a continuity in history rather than a deconstruction on Paul's side. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the original ordinance was able to distinguish so sharply between the two levels, when Paul was using Abraham as a historical example and when he was not. It is much more natural to understand Paul's use of Abraham as being consistent, using him as one who was

<sup>273</sup> Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.114f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.240; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.110.

<sup>274</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.282.

<sup>275</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.163f.

<sup>276</sup> Klein, *Rekonstruktion*, p.163.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.112-127, Wilckens, *Römer* 3,21-4,25, p.586-610 for more reasons against Klein's position.

indeed justified like those after the Christ event and is thus perfectly suited for use as an example and model.

A repetition of all the arguments for the salvation-historical continuity would certainly be out of place,<sup>278</sup> but Sanders' work and his claim that the Jews were not legalistic, in addition to the arguments given above, tears the basic premise apart that there is no salvation-historical continuity.<sup>279</sup> In that case there remains no reason why Abraham and others before the Christ event should not have been justified. There is a salvation-historical continuity and the reasoning of those who hold that Abraham is only a type creates severe exegetical (e.g. how Paul can use Abraham as an example, being part of the old aeon) and historical problems (e.g. anti-Semitism). Abraham is, thus, more than a mere type of the Christians for the time after the Christ event. He himself was justified by faith like many others.

### **Abraham used exclusively for the Inclusion of Gentiles**

In contrast to all the other scholars the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach does not consider Abraham to be a type or model of the believer. It is rather said that Paul argues with Abraham for the inclusion of the Gentiles.<sup>280</sup> This position was explained earlier, but it remains for us to discuss if Romans 4 is indeed only about the inclusion of the Gentiles, so that Abraham is not meant to be a model.

Rom.4:11b-16 is a crucial passage from which it is argued that Paul's statements are clearly about the inclusion of the Gentiles. For this reason we will take a closer look at it and the arguments of the scholars of the two-covenant hermeneutical approach. Among Gager, Gaston, and Stowers, it is Stowers who provides the fullest exegesis of it.<sup>281</sup> We will, therefore, discuss his position, which will include the few exegetical comments of the other scholars. Stowers claims that with Rom.4:11b-12 Paul is confirming that Abraham is the father of the Jews (in their ancient covenant) and the Gentiles with their recent redemption through Christ.<sup>282</sup> With Romans 4:13 Paul argues that the promise of the inclusion of the

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<sup>278</sup> See 'Salvation historical Continuity' p.35-36 above.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Paul*; Sanders, *Law*.

<sup>280</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.122; Gager, *Origins*, p.216; Marquardt, *Juden*, p.37+39.

<sup>281</sup> Gager, *Origins*, p.218; Stowers, *Rereading*, p.243-247; Gaston, *Torah*, p.60-62, 123-124.

<sup>282</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.243.

Gentiles did not come to Abraham through the law, but through his faithfulness. Stowers moves on to explain Rom.4:14 in the sense that if *only* the Jews were heirs, Abraham's promise would be void.<sup>283</sup> Rom.4:15 has, therefore, to be understood as referring to the Gentiles since it is only for them that the law works wrath. We have earlier rejected Stowers' and Gaston's translation of Rom.4:14, since the Greek text simply does not contain the 'only'. It states, consequently, that the adherents of the law could not be heirs, i.e. that physical descent, the possession or observance of the law did not make them heirs. The second problem with Stowers' interpretation is that Paul is not arguing that the Gentiles can be included since the Christ event in Rom.4:11b, for they were able to be justified by faith before it. This destroys the basic premise of those who hold the view of two-covenantal hermeneutical that Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles through Christ since the Christ event. Another major problem lies in Stowers' interpretation of Rom.4:13. He has interpreted the ἐπαγγελία as meaning the original promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations (Rom.4:17). It might be correct to argue that Paul himself thought that the ἐπαγγελία means the original promise as quoted in Rom.4:17, but Paul is using it here in the Jewish sense of inheritance of the world. Even if it is understood in the original sense, it is not clear why the 'many nations' should exclude the Jewish nation. Seen from Abraham's view there was no Jewish nation, so that God could have promised Abraham that he will be the father of *additional* nations. When God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations that included the Jewish nation.<sup>284</sup> If the promise is interpreted from Paul's perspective in the sense that the 'many nations' refers in fact to the Gentile nations,<sup>285</sup> the problem of the interpretation of Rom.4:14 remains and makes Rom.4:13 intelligible only if it is understood in the Jewish sense. Paul's intention by using the 'promise' in Rom.4:13 in the sense the Jews understood it is to demolish their view that the promise of the inheritance of the world was dependent on Abraham's and their observance and possession of the law (cf. Sir 44:21; *Jub.* 17:9; 19:21; 22:14; 32:19; Mex 14:31; Str-

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<sup>283</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.246.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.269.

<sup>285</sup> So also Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.142f.

B 3.209; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 14:13; 51:3; 4Esr 7,119).<sup>286</sup> Thus Paul is not arguing that the promise of the inclusion of the Gentiles came to Abraham apart from the law, but that the promise was not given to Abraham because of the (possession or observance of the) law. The law had no part in the promise. Taken together with Rom.4:14, Paul rejects, therefore, that notion that merely the possession of the law makes one a descendant of Abraham and that those counting on their physical father Abraham would have a part in the promise. Only those justified by faith are Abraham's descendants and have a part in the promise.

From such a perspective the often pointed out 'not only' of Rom.4:16 cannot be used for the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach either.<sup>287</sup> Paul is not saying that 'not only' the Jews can be justified but now also the Gentiles, the Jews by the law and the Gentiles by faith in Christ through the Christ event. He is rather concluding his argument against the Jewish position that the Jews are justified because of their possession and obedience to the law. It is, therefore, 'not only' the Jews (who possess the law), but also the Gentiles who are justified by faith apart from the works and possession of the law.<sup>288</sup>

Rom.4:1 causes another problem for the proponents of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach. If it is understood in the sense of "What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found?" answered by Paul with grace through the justification apart from works of the law, it is too general a statement that would imply that Paul uses Abraham as a model for the concept of justification by faith. Gaston refers, therefore, to Hays' work and his interpretation of Rom.4:1.<sup>289</sup> We have rejected this interpretation<sup>290</sup> and so also does Stowers.<sup>291</sup> He tries to eliminate the paradigmatic implication of the sentence for all humankind by claiming that the verse is concerned about the teacher's claim that Gentiles can enter a right relation with God by doing works of the law. By claiming that Rom.4:1 is only discussing the soteriological function of the works of the law for the Gentiles, it

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.384; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.269f.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.212; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.142f.

<sup>287</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.246; Gager, *Origins*, p.218+220.

<sup>288</sup> See 'Faith, the Law and its Works' p.100-101 above.

<sup>289</sup> Gaston, *Torah*, p.124f.

<sup>290</sup> See 'The Purpose of Paul's use Abraham' p.93-97 above.

<sup>291</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.242.

loses its paradigmatic function for all humankind. In response it may be said that the text used by Stowers to argue for a Jewish teacher (Rom.2:17-24) has been shown not to refer only to a teacher but to all Jews.<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, that the context is concerned with the justification of the Gentiles is not as clear as Stowers claims. The first problem with Stowers' view is that Paul refers in Rom.4:1 to Abraham as 'our father according to the flesh', which no Gentile could claim for himself to be true. The passage that shows that Paul is addressing Jews as well is his citation of a Jew, David, in Rom.4:6-8 and that even he was justified/forgiven by faith in God. That Jews are also included in the discussion is, furthermore, shown by Paul's rejection of the soteriological efficacy of possession and mere obedience to the law in Rom.4:13-15 and his repeated reference to the Jews and Gentiles in Rom.3:29-30. If then the relation of justification to faith and 'works of the law' is discussed with Abraham for Jew and Gentile, Abraham has a paradigmatic function for both.

We conclude that the proponents of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach fail to be convincing in their argumentation that Abraham is used by Paul to argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles. Rom.4:11b-16, which is said to be explicit in its inclusive language, argues rather that the promise is dependent on faith and has nothing to do with the possession of the law, so that not only the Jews but all can be justified by faith. Furthermore, the paradigmatic implication of Rom.4:1 can only be avoided by the proponents of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach by using Hays' translation or by limiting it to the Gentiles. Both options have been shown to be problematic, so that the inference that Abraham functions as a model for Jew and Gentile seems appropriate.

### **Abraham as a Model**

Now that we have shown that Abraham functions not only as a type but also as an argument for the inclusion of the Gentiles, we will move on to discuss how Paul uses Abraham as a model, for whom Abraham might function as a model, and how Paul applies the model of Abraham.

After his argument that Abraham was reckoned righteous because of his faith (Rom.4:1-8), apart from the 'works of the law' (Rom.4:9-12), that the promise

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<sup>292</sup> See 'The Jews, the Works of the Law, and Justification by Faith' p.40 above.

cannot rest on the law (Rom.4:13-16), and what the nature of Abraham's faith is (Rom.17-21), Paul comes to his conclusion and application of the Abraham model in Rom.4:23-25. We have taken a closer look at Rom.4:24-25,<sup>293</sup> although we have avoided discussing Rom.4:23 in this context, because of its importance for our understanding of the paradigmatic function of Abraham.

### *Hays' Suggestion*

We will begin our discussion with Hays suggestion that Rom.4:23-24a does *not* express that Abraham is an illustration of the general principle of justification by faith. Rather, what has been pronounced to Abraham applies not only to him but also to others who are vicariously included in God's justification.<sup>294</sup> He draws this conclusion from Rom.4:9-12, 13, which is said to express that the blessing of Abraham applies vicariously to Jew and Gentile. Furthermore, the Genesis texts (Gen.12:3; 18:18; 22:18), which are important for Paul's exegesis, pronounce that all nations will be blessed *in* Abraham.<sup>295</sup> Rom.4:23-24 has to be understood similarly, Abraham was likewise justified vicariously and his justification applies thus to Jew and Gentile who have faith. By quoting Sanders' findings<sup>296</sup> he tries to show that "the motif of the merits of the fathers can often be closely associated with the idea of God's faithfulness to his promises and with the motif of covenant election."<sup>297</sup> The merits of Abraham are not in view here, but rather God's promise. In that sense Abraham functions for the believer not simply as an example of faith, but by having faith the believer actually participates in Abraham's blessing of being reckoned righteous by being himself reckoned righteous.

In response to this view it may be said that there is indeed a sense in which the believer participates in Abraham's blessing by having faith, for he is justified like Abraham by faith and becomes thus a partaker in the covenant community of faith. However, to say that "the blessing pronounced on Abraham applies vicariously to others who are his 'seed'"<sup>298</sup> seems to go beyond the evidence. Rom.4:9-13 does not

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<sup>293</sup> See 'Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language' p.86-91 above.

<sup>294</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.93f.; cf. Stowers, *Rereading*, p.247f. who adopts Hays' view.

<sup>295</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.94.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Paul*, p.183-198.

<sup>297</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.95.

<sup>298</sup> Hays, *Abraham*, p.94.



ask whether Abraham's blessing applies to Jew and Gentile, but it states that Abraham was justified apart from the 'works of the law' (circumcision), so that he might be the father of all who are justified by faith. His fatherhood consists not in the fact that he represents somehow all, Jew and Gentile, or that he was justified vicariously for all, but in the fact that they are justified like him, so that the covenant between God and Abraham applies to them as well. The promise is then introduced in Rom.4:13 in the Jewish sense of inheritance of the world to argue that the promise does not rest on the possession and mere obedience to the law for Abraham and his descendants but on the righteousness by faith. This interpretation does certainly not confirm that the blessing pronounced on Abraham applies vicariously to his descendants, but that the one justified by faith is a true descendant of Abraham; he is someone who is justified like but not through Abraham. Rom.4:9-13 can thus not be used in support of an interpretation of Rom.4:23-24a claiming that Abraham was justified vicariously. Furthermore, if Abraham were justified vicariously his soteriological position in history would have been more important, for all those having faith would have been justified through Abraham's faith! Such a crucial role for Abraham in salvation history would certainly have been more emphasised by Paul if it were intended, and it would have needed a more thorough explanation if it were to be grasped by the original recipients, who were mainly a Gentile Roman congregation probably unaware of those sources used by Sanders. These arguments make Hays' view highly unlikely, for it would give Abraham too central a role in salvation-history, which was certainly not Paul's intention.

### ***Paradigmatic Language and Paul's use of Abraham***

Hays' position has raised the question of what's the proper view of Paul's use of Abraham as a model. Käsemann states in his attempt to define how Paul uses typological language that "Nicht irgendwelche geschichtlichen Ereignisse werden in ihr verwertet, sondern nur solche, welche positiv oder negativ dem Verhältnis von Urzeit und Endzeit entsprechen ..."<sup>299</sup> For Käsemann typology interprets a historical event that has in itself meaning, but its eschatological relation is revealed only by comparison from the eschatological perspective with an eschatological event. What is

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<sup>299</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.120.

at focus is not the example of Abraham but his destiny that influences the whole world. Abraham is the *Urbild* of faith, he being 'father of us all' (Rom.4:16), and not one example among others.<sup>300</sup> He, who lived before the Christ event, has received the promise and with him the Gospel of the justification by faith has begun.<sup>301</sup>

Käsemann's views that with Abraham the Gospel of the justification by faith has begun (Rom.4:11) and that his destiny that influences the world is at focus rather than Abraham's faith have to be discussed next. Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith and not by the 'works of the law'. By his usage of Abraham he, furthermore, shows that one was meant to be justified by faith at all times and that those justified by faith are the true descendants of Abraham. However, the notion that because of this fatherhood he is said to have a special status must be questioned. When God gave Abraham the promise of innumerable descendants he did not say that they would have to be justified by faith. For Abraham God was speaking about physically born descendants. The fatherhood of those justified by faith is attributed to Abraham by Paul. It is Paul's interpretation of the promise (from an eschatological position as Käsemann rightly says). However, this fatherhood attributed to Abraham must not inevitably mean that Abraham was the first ever justified by faith. Since it is 'only' Paul's interpretation, justification by faith before Abraham was not by any means impossible. Furthermore, fatherhood sets one in relation to those after but not to those prior to one. The view that the Gospel began with Abraham is thus not necessarily correct, it might have begun before him.

Käsemann wants to give Abraham a special status by calling him the *Urbild* of faith, since he is the 'father of us all' and not one example among others. When this implies that he was the first ever justified by faith, we could not agree for the reasons given above. If this means that Paul tries to show that Abraham was not the father of the Jewish nation as the only elected nation by God but of those justified by faith, the people of faith, and is thus important, that is certainly correct. Paul has indeed interpreted Abraham's promise from an eschatological position and made him the father of all those who believe (Rom.4:11b-12; 16). The importance of Abraham is to

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<sup>300</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.120; cf. Wilckens, *Rechtfertigung*, p.114f.; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.282f.; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.135.

<sup>301</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.120; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.283.

be admitted since he has always played an important role in Jewish history. Paul has thus to his advantage changed the Jewish interpretation that he was the first Jew.

Käsemann's extends this view and claims that it is Abraham's destiny that influences the world that is mainly in focus. This cannot be agreed to, for Paul's main interest was not only to re-interpret Abraham's destiny and its effects on world-history. Another interest of Paul was at least equally important. Abraham was used by the Jews as a type of or model for a devout Jew.<sup>302</sup> Paul now intends to use Abraham not as a model for a devout Jew, but by showing how justifying faith looks like he was re-interpreting Abraham as a model for the believer, so that his example is applicable to the Roman congregation. To illustrate justifying faith Paul could have used someone else from the Old Testament, but the central position of Abraham in the Jewish tradition and his example of faith that can be applied so well to the Christ event, made Abraham perfect for this paradigmatic purpose. This paradigmatic function of Abraham is, furthermore, confirmed by στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἰχνεσιν in Rom.4:12. This 'following in the footsteps' of Abraham suggests that the Jews addressed are meant to imitate Abraham's faith.<sup>303</sup> They are to copy Abraham's life of faith by following his example.

We conclude, that Paul in his paradigmatic use of Abraham did not intend to argue that Abraham was the first person ever to be justified. Nor was Paul only interested in Abraham's destiny and its influence on the world, but his intention was likewise to show who a true descendant of Abraham is and how Abraham's faith looked like in order to use it as an example of faith.

#### *The Scope of καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς in Rom.4:24a*

Having discussed Paul's usage of Abraham and what he intends to show and argue with him, we can return to our discussion and interpretation of Rom.4:23-24a. The grammar of Rom.4:23-24a is plain, so that the translation of it reads 'The words 'it was reckoned to him' were not written for his [Abraham's] sake only, but for ours also.' The repetition of 'reckoning' connects Rom.4:23 directly with Rom.4:22, which was Paul's conclusion of his argumentation. Having given the reasons why (because of God's grace and his faith) and how Abraham (apart from 'works of the

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<sup>302</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.200; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.370f.; Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.127.

law' and the possession of the law) was reckoned righteous, Paul intends to show that the story of Abraham was written down also for those included in the ἡμεῖς of Rom.4:24a. That it was written down for Abraham's sake probably confirms that the history has value and is important.<sup>304</sup> That it was written down καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς (Rom.4:24a), on the other hand, has to be interpreted in the light of Paul's former argumentation and opens the question for whom it was written. Was it only for the Gentiles after the Christ event, for the Jews and Gentiles after the Christ event, or for the Jews and Gentiles independent of the Christ event? That the Gentiles after the Christ event are included is not in dispute, but that the Jews are included is disapproved by Stowers.<sup>305</sup> However, that at least the Roman congregation is included in the ἡμεῖς nobody can deny and we have argued that the Roman congregation did not only consist of Gentiles even if they constitute the larger part. Solely this fact indicates that Jews were addressed, too. In addition, the context, especially Rom.4:11-12, 16-17, shows that Paul is arguing for a universal concept applicable to Jew and Gentile. We have already shown that Rom.4:1 is likewise not just directed towards Gentiles, but again to Jew and Gentile.<sup>306</sup> The whole argument of Romans 4 is thus not concerned solely with the Gentiles. Finally, it has to be mentioned that Paul himself who is a Jew is included in the ἡμεῖς. That the ἡμεῖς addresses Jews and Gentiles seems, therefore, to be obvious and indisputable.

Whether those Jews and Gentiles were only Paul and the Roman congregation, is the next issue to be clarified. None of the scholars consulted in the production of this work have actually argued that the ἡμεῖς refers only to the recipients and Paul. It is rather usually claimed that it refers to all Jewish and Gentile Christians because of its general paradigmatic function and the reference to the Christ event in Rom.4:24b-25.<sup>307</sup> From our former discussion of Rom.4:24b-25,<sup>308</sup> we could argue that Paul is in fact not referring to the time after the Christ event alone but to all humankind

<sup>303</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.381; Dunn, *Romans*, p.211f.

<sup>304</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121; Dunn, *Romans*, p.222.

<sup>305</sup> Stowers, *Rereading*, p.247.

<sup>306</sup> See 'Abraham, used exclusively for the Inclusion of Gentiles' p.111-112 above.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.147; Dunn, *Romans*, p.240; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.119ff.; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.96; Stuhlmacher, *Römer*, p.70.

<sup>308</sup> See 'Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language' p.86-91 above.

justified by faith at all times, since the Christ event is mentioned only for functional reasons. It could then be argued that since Paul's argumentation was thus far showing that all humankind could be justified at all times by faith, the ἡμεῖς refers not only to Christians, but again to all humankind before and after the Christ event. However, in the light of the language used by Paul such an interpretation is unlikely. That the recipients would understand the ἡμεῖς as referring to them and Christians in general is much more likely. The mention of the Christ event in Rom.4:24b-25 does indeed support such an interpretation, for the reference to it indicates that those who are aware of it are addressed. The application of the midrash of Abraham thus refers primarily to the Jewish and Gentile Christians addressed by Paul, but likewise because of its general character to all Christians.

Before we move on to discuss further how the example of Abraham is applied to Christians, it has to be said that the example of Abraham does not apply to them alone. Paul was of course primarily interested to show that it applies to them, but his description of Abraham, his faith, and who his true descendants are has shown that Abraham and his faith has always been applicable to all humankind which is justified by faith, for he is their 'father'.<sup>309</sup> To validate this claim we can refer back to our former findings. Paul has shown that Jew and Gentile, before and after the Christ event, were and are able to be justified by faith (Rom.2:7-10, 26-29; 3.22, 29-30; 4:5-8, 11-12, 16, 24) apart from the possession of the law and the 'works of the law' (Rom.2:26-29; 3:20-21, 24, 27-31; 4:2-16). For those before the Christ event it meant that they were justified apart from any Christological knowledge, yet Christ did provide the means for their justification (Rom.3:24-25; 4:24b-25). Their faith was consequently faith in God and trust that he would provide the necessary means for their justification. However, our discussion has shown that this is likewise true for those after the Christ event. Knowledge of the Christ event is not indispensably necessary for one's justification, it is rather faith in God and the trust that he has provided the necessary means for one's justification, which he has done in the Christ event as shown by Rom.3:24-25; 4:25. Their faith and the faith of Paul and the Roman congregation are equivalent. If Paul is able to apply the example of Abraham to the Roman congregation and their faith and the faith of all justified is equivalent,

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.276ff.; Dunn, *Romans*, p.239f.

then the example of Abraham can be applied to all justified by faith. The example of Abraham is, therefore, an example for all those justified by faith before and after the Christ event, including those after the Christ event who have no Christological knowledge but faith in God like Abraham. However, Paul's main interest is to apply it to Roman congregation.

### ***Paul's Application of Abraham's example***

Having discussed whom the example of Abraham is applicable and what Paul uses this paradigmatic language for, we will have to consider how Paul applies the example of Abraham's faith to the Romans congregation. He uses several points of comparison for his application. The first point of comparison is the λογίζομαι that is attributed to Abraham and the Roman congregation (Rom.4:23-24a). For Paul this was the point of departure of his argumentation in Rom.4:3: What does it mean that Abraham was reckoned righteous? 'Reckoned righteous' means here that God has forgiven and justified as a gift apart from the law by faith in spite of sin (Rom.4:5-10). In the same sense the Roman congregation μέλλει λογίζεσθαι (Rom.4:24a). Some scholars (1) interpret this with a present sense, building the basis of the present life of believers.<sup>310</sup> However, most scholars (2) would take it with a future sense referring to the eschatological judgement.<sup>311</sup> Other scholars (3) argue that Paul has those in mind that will be attracted by the Gospel.<sup>312</sup> The last option is unlikely for the ἡμεῖς restricts Rom.4:24a to the Roman congregation, and the tense of λογίζομαι speaks against the first. Had Paul intended (1) he would probably have used a present or aorist tense of λογίζομαι.<sup>313</sup> Wilckens, however, argues that the whole of Romans 4 has in view the Christian present time from Abraham's perspective, which would explain the future sense of λογίζομαι. This is supported by Rom.5:14 which shows a corresponding use of a present tense (cf. also 1.Pet.5:1; Heb.1:14; 10:1; Col.2:17).<sup>314</sup> Paul does not clarify himself further on this issue, so that the first and second options remain possible. We, therefore, agree with Dunn that

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<sup>310</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, p.96; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277, Footnote 902.

<sup>311</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.240; Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.135; Schmithals, *Römerbrief*, p.147; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, p.388.

<sup>312</sup> Zahn, *Römer*, p.239.

<sup>313</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.121; Dunn, *Romans*, p.240.

<sup>314</sup> Wilckens, *Römer*, p.277, Footnote 902.

Paul does not clarify the statement, because for Paul justification is not a once-for-all event in the past or future. It is an acceptance of persons, initially, repeatedly sustaining, or at the final judgement.<sup>315</sup> Even if the meaning of λογίζομαι is not certain, it is certain that Abraham like the Roman congregation are said to be reckoned righteous. They are thus like Abraham justified by faith through grace apart from the 'works of the law' in spite of their sin.

The parallel does not end here. Abraham believed in God and so did the Christians of the Roman congregation. Furthermore, their faith is faith in God who is able to raise the dead and so is Abraham's. The significance of these two characteristics has already been discussed.<sup>316</sup> In summary it may be repeated that this indicates that Abraham and the Christians in Rome had faith in God by trusting him that he is able to raise the dead, but predominantly that he has provided the means for their justification. 'Faith in God' is a complete surrender to his grace, trusting him that he can justify sinners by providing the means for one's justification. That there is no reference to 'faith in Christ' indicates that there is no 'typological increase'. The faith of the Roman congregation is not different to Abraham's. The Christ event has not changed the character of justifying faith. The only difference between the two is that Abraham had to believe for the means of his justification in the future and the faith of the Christians in Rome was directed at the past for their means of justification.

To conclude, the example of Abraham's faith parallels the faith of the Roman congregation by being faith that was (will be) reckoned to them as a gift by grace and apart from the 'works of the law'. Abraham and the Roman congregation believe in God by trusting him that he has provided the means for their justification. It is a faith that totally submits to God the almighty who has in Christ atoned for the sins of humanity and thus made justification possible. Christology in Paul's application of Abraham's faith is restricted to the functional aspects of the provision of the means for the justification, so that the faith of Abraham and the Roman congregation may be said to be completely the same in respect to the points of comparison.

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<sup>315</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, p.240.

<sup>316</sup> See 'Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language' p.88-89 above.

Summarising this section we may say that Abraham is neither only a type that is surpassed by the Christian faith, nor is he used by Paul to argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles on the basis of the Christ event. It is also not Paul's intention to argue that in Abraham all are justified vicariously as Hays maintains. Paul does intend to argue with Abraham that he cannot be claimed to be the first Jew by the Jews, for he is the father of the justified by faith, Jew or Gentile. This justification is not a matter of obedience or possession of the law or physical descent, but a matter of faith. One is reckoned righteous by faith through God's grace in spite of sin, whereby faith is 'faith in God'. This 'faith in God' is a total submission to his mercy and a trust that he is almighty and able to justify even sinners by providing the means for it, which he has done in the Christ event.

Having made these fundamental claims with Abraham, Paul compares Abraham's faith with the faith of the Roman congregation and concludes that their faith is the same as Abraham's. In respect to the points of comparison there is no difference, for he and they are reckoned righteous by God and believe in the same almighty God and trust him (in Abraham's case knowingly or not)<sup>317</sup> that he has provided the means for their justification.<sup>318</sup>

From Paul's use of Abraham it can, furthermore, be inferred that this paradigmatic function of Abraham is not only applicable to Paul and the Roman congregation, but to all who were and are justified by faith. This includes Jews and Gentiles in the time prior to Christ and the Jewish and Gentile Christians after the Christ event, but also those after the Christ event who are not aware of it but yet have faith like Abraham.

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<sup>317</sup> Cf. Wilckens, *Römer*, p.263; Cranfield, *Romans*, p.86f.; Schlier, *Römerbrief*, p.125f.; Kuss, *Römerbrief*, p.183.

<sup>318</sup> See 'The Efficacy of the Christ Event' p.64-72 and 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.81-83 above.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

#### SUMMARY OF PAUL'S ARGUMENTATION OF ROMANS 1-4

##### **Preliminary Considerations**

In our discussion of Romans 1-4 we have come across three main views of interpretation. They are roughly categorised as firstly, the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach which claims that Paul argues with Romans 1-4 for the inclusion of the Gentiles, secondly, the traditional view that argues that there is no salvation-historical continuity, but that the righteousness of God through justification by faith in Jesus Christ has been revealed through the Christ event. Paul is said to argue with Rom.1:18-3:20 that humankind before the Christ event was under the wrath of God. This age of wrath has ceased and with Christ the age of grace has begun. The third position maintains that there is a salvation-historical continuity. Justification by faith is possible even before the Christ event and with the Christ event God has revealed his righteousness which was formerly hidden.

Sanders has contributed to this discussion by arguing that the Jews did not consider themselves to be legalistic, so that the position that Paul was arguing against Jewish legalism to establish his concept of justification by faith had to be rethought. Those of the two-covenantal hermeneutical approach tried to use Sanders' findings to claim that Paul does not argue against the Jewish covenant based on the law, but for the inclusion of the Gentiles apart from the Jewish covenant. They are justified apart from the law by faith and the Jews with the law. Those who argued that there is no salvation-historical continuity were shown to be wrong by Sanders' findings and those who argue for a salvation-historical continuity were supported in their position. However, it had to be redefined what Paul was arguing for and against. According to Dunn, Paul was not arguing against Jewish legalism, but against Jewish exclusiveness which claimed that they were the only elected by God.

All these views express different opinions on Romans 1-4, but these chapters do not build a closed unit. A proper interpretation of Romans 1-4 is, therefore, crucial, for on the basis of these chapters Paul establishes in the rest of the letter his

arguments and applications. However, before the interpretation of Romans 1-4 can be discussed intelligibly, the purposes of writing have to be considered. Those we are aware of are Paul's missionary enterprise to Spain for which he hoped to use Rome as his base (Rom.15:14-32), his journey to Jerusalem (Rom.15:25-26, 30-32), and internal conflicts in the Romans congregation (Rom.11:17-25; 12:3, 16; 14:3). The latter two purposes of writing seem to overlap the same problem Paul was facing. In Jerusalem and Rome Christians were discussing the role of the Jewish law, whether Gentile Christians are meant to fulfil the requirements of the law or not.

An additional purpose of writing could be that Paul intended to write his 'testament', his theology. It has been argued that this is unlikely since crucial elements expressed in other Pauline letters are missing. Paul might not have intended to write his testament but did it in fact by discussing the fundamental questions of the role of the law and justifying faith.

These are the main purposes of writing we are aware of. They show that Paul was primarily interested in discussing the role of the law and justifying faith for Jew and Gentile with Romans 1-4 in order to draw his conclusions and applications from it.

### **Paul's Argument in Romans 1-4**

#### ***General Observations***

Discussing Romans 1-4 we concluded that Paul argues first of all that all human beings are sinners and are in need of God's grace (Rom.1:18-3:21). Paul denies that 'works of the law' have any soteriological efficacy (Rom.2:13, 29-29; 3:20-21, 27-28), for not 'works of the law' but faith justifies and fulfils the law in the proper sense (Rom.2:7-10, 26-29; 3:22, 24-31). This means that the law was never intended to be understood or fulfilled without faith. The law was given to reveal sin (Rom.3:20) and to work wrath (Rom.4:15), so that all humankind might be aware that they are in need of God's grace (Rom.3:24; 4:4, 16). The Jews possessed the law and it gave them the responsibility to make God's will known (Rom.3:2), but it gave them no special status soteriologically (Rom.3:1-2; 4:9-16). Justification is not dependent on 'works of the law' or possession of the law, but rather on faith. It is,

therefore, that Jew and Gentile before and after the Christ event were and are meant to be justified by faith (Rom.2:7-10, 13, 25-29; 3:21-31; 4:11b-12, 16).

With the Christ event God has provided the means for the justification of those having faith (Rom.3:22, 24-25; 4:24b-25). He has done so for all times, past and present, and thus revealed his righteousness (Rom.3:25-26; 4:5-8). By using the expression 'faith in Christ', Paul is not intending to denote a personal relationship of trust in Christ Jesus (Rom.3:22-26, 28-30; 4:4:5, 24-25). 'Faith in Christ' denotes primarily that God has provided the means for the justification of humankind with Christ. Christ is not the object of faith for Paul in Romans 1-4, but God (Rom.3:27-31; 4:3, 5, 16-22, 24).

It is not known why Paul uses 'faith in God'-language, but his whole language is theocentric rather than Christocentric (e.g. Rom.1:8, 17; 3:21-22, 25-26, 29-30; 4:1-25). This theocentric language is not used for comparative reasons in Rom.4:24 only, for other passages like Rom.4:5-8 express the same idea of 'faith in God' in general terms. From these passages it may be inferred that justifying faith is not necessarily in need of knowledge of Christ and the Christ event. Justifying faith is a complete surrender to God and his grace and a trust that he can justify sinners by providing the means for it (Rom.3:22-26, 28-30; 4:4:5, 24-25). However, by trusting God that he can provide the means for justification, it is trusted in Christ as the one making justification possible. Such faith in Christ could be called 'indirect faith in Christ' for him and his deed is trusted without necessarily knowing him. Without the Christ event no one could ever be justified, but Christological knowledge is not necessarily needed. This is not to say that Christological knowledge is meaningless, but that justification is possible without it. This form of 'indirect faith in Christ' has been present before the Christ event, but is not limited to that time. From Paul's comparison of Abraham's faith with the faith of those after the Christ event and from his definition of justifying faith, it may be inferred that justifying faith is not necessarily in need of Christological knowledge even after the Christ event.

### ***Paul's Argumentation with Abraham***

Paul is confirming these views with his example of Abraham in Romans 4 with whom he tries to argue primarily for the concept of justification by faith apart from 'works of the law'. Paul has argued for the sinfulness of Jew and Gentile before the

Christ event (Rom.1:18-3:20) and for the Jews Abraham was the first Jew. However, Paul bases his argument on the fact that he was a Gentile and sinner (Rom.4:5) justified by faith through grace apart from any works of the law (Rom.4:9-11a) and its possession (Rom.4:13-16). A true descendant of Abraham is, therefore, anybody who is justified by faith, circumcised or not (Rom.4:11b-12, 16). In all those justified by faith the promise is, therefore, fulfilled (Rom.4:13-16). Abraham was justified through faith in God who provided also for Abraham the means for his justification in the Christ event (Rom.3:25; 4:5). In this sense he had faith in Christ, for he believed that God can call into existence non-existent things (Rom.4:17), i.e. justify the ungodly (Rom.4:5), and that he can provide the means for his justification. His faith in God is a faith in a God who is able to raise the dead and create *ex nihilo* (Rom.4:17). He trusted God against all human possibilities and set his hope totally on God (Rom.4:18-20). Since there is no human effort, no 'work of the law' linked to his faith but pure surrender to God, Abraham could not boast in anything he did (Rom.4:2).

This example of Abraham is, therefore, used by Paul to explain further the relation of justification to faith and 'works of the law', but he also intended to redefine the role of Abraham in history. He was claimed to be the father of the Jews only, but Paul redefines him to be the father of all the ones believing (Rom.4:11b-12, 16). Paul explains, furthermore, Abraham's faith, so that he can apply it to himself and the Roman congregation, to explain to them how justifying faith looks like (Rom.4:23-25). This application is, however, not restricted to them only, for anyone justified by faith has the same faith as them, so that the example of Abraham is applicable to all, before and after the Christ event, who are justified by faith. This includes also those who have no Christological knowledge after the Christ event, but whose faith is also like Abraham's.

### OBSTACLES FOR AN APPLICATION

We have given thus far a summary of Paul's argumentation of Romans 1-4, which already included some applications. These have to be verified in the following discussion, for before we can actually reflect on the significance of Abraham and the 'faith in God'-language for theology today, we have to clarify whether this view of his concept of justification by faith, or the concept in general, is the basis for Paul's

theology as a whole or if Paul is an occasional thinker. In the latter case, Romans is addressing only a specific situation in Rome, but is not necessarily expressing Paul's fundamental views applicable for today. Having discussed these issues, we will come closer to an understanding of the significance of Abraham as an example for the contemporary time.

### **The Centrality of Paul's Concept of Justification by Faith**

This discussion of the centrality of the concept of justification by faith is not an attempt to discuss the matter fully,<sup>1</sup> but rather to reflect on the different positions and the issues raised to come to a possible solution in this matter.

#### ***A general Categorisation of the different Views***

The discussion of the centrality of justification is old and consequently contains a wide spectrum of opinions. The discussion among scholars is, however, not solely concerned with the question of whether justification is the centre of Paul's thought, but also what and where the centre in general might be. Beker has tried to categorise the debate in three major sections, (1) the catholic, (2) the Marcionite, and (3) the psychological solution.<sup>2</sup> The first solution was the position of the early church who focused on Paul, the missionary, i.e. on his personality rather than on his theology in order to integrate him among the other witnesses. A discussion of the centrality was thus avoided.

The second solution follows Marcion by focusing on the centre and unity of Paul's thought. The centre is selected and the rest, Beker claims, is pushed to the periphery. According to Beker scholars like Wrede, Schweitzer, Käsemann, Bultmann, Sanders have to be counted among this group.

His third and final group is not looking for a doctrinal centre, but is basically developmental by trying to free Paul from dogmatic thought categories. This approach "could only achieve a Pauline 'core' by locating it in his pretextual psyche. Paul's centre becomes located in his religious personality rather than in his thought."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller overview of the different positions concerning the question of the centrality of the concept of justification by faith cf. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*.

<sup>2</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.28-33.

<sup>3</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.32.

To explain the differences in his letters reference is made to his psycho-religious development over the years (e.g. Dodd).

The first option obviously lacks looking closer at Paul's thought and its variety. The last option in its attempt to explain the variety of his thought by referring to his psychological development has to explain why Paul should have undergone such a change of thought in about six years of writing letters when he had about fifteen beforehand to form his opinions.<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that there was no psychological change, for everyone's opinion changes through experiences, discussions, and problems, but whether they can explain all of Paul's varieties of writing is questionable.

The second position has been rejected by Beker since it is said to impose "a unity of thought on Paul and thus destroyed the variety of thought in the Pauline letters."<sup>5</sup> Before we can discuss the validity of this claim, we will have to discuss where scholars tried to find a theological centre and the problems with their views.

### ***'Christology' as Paul's suggested Centre of Thought***

Those who tried to find a theological centre can be grouped in two basic positions. The first group finds Paul's centre of thought in Christology and the second in his concept of forensic justification.

William Wrede in his *Paulus* argued that justification for Paul is only his *Kampfeslehre*. It is not the centre of his thought, but his teaching used to refute his opponents, the Jews. It was, therefore, unimportant to his primary soteriology. He did not draw his theology from a Hellenistic environment or apocalyptic Judaism, although the latter did influence him. Paul rather developed his theology on his own terms into the *Erlösungslehre*, being independent from any influence in its development.<sup>6</sup> Paul was not interested in developing a systematic teaching, but used rabbinical methods to express his thought, which explains the differences in his letters.<sup>7</sup> For Wrede "die ganze paulinische Lehre ist Lehre von Christus und seinem

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<sup>4</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.33; Wrede, *Paulus*, p.29.

<sup>5</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Wrede, *Paulus*, p.82ff.

<sup>7</sup> Wrede, *Paulus*, p.47ff.

Werk; dies ist ihr Wesen."<sup>8</sup> Christology is thus the centre of Paul's thought on which the rest of his teachings are based.

Similar to Wrede, Schweitzer in *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* argues that the "Lehre von der Gerechtigkeit aus dem Glauben ist also ein Nebenkrater, der sich im Hauptkrater der Erlösungsmystik des Seins in Christo bildet."<sup>9</sup> Justification is thus not the centre but Christology, *Sein in Christo*. However, in contrast to Wrede, who's view was strangely disconnected from Paul's environment, Schweitzer argues that Paul's thought was derived from the 'Jewish eschatological mysticism'. According to Romans 7, Paul knew that it was impossible to be justified through the law.<sup>10</sup> The scribes of Paul's time understood forgiveness of sin in the same way as indicated by 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, so that it was sought in God's sin-forgiving grace.<sup>11</sup> His mystical conception of being in Christ then changed Paul's mind to an understanding that grace and the law are incompatible, which Romans 7 expresses clearly. Like Paul, the scribes believed that with the Messiah the law would cease to function. With his acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah Paul confessed and argued for this.

Among other criticisms, Seifrid argues that the basis which Schweitzer sought in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch for his concept is a misunderstanding and an imposing of his views on these texts. The scribes of Paul's time did not believe that the law would cease to function, for otherwise Paul would have been able to appeal to it to convince his contemporaries, which he has not.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Schweitzer's claim that justification by faith is not central, because it appears only in polemical contexts, is not able to establish the relative unimportance of this concept.<sup>13</sup> Nor is it an argument that can disprove its centrality.

Sanders largely followed Schweitzer in his argumentation. For him the centre of Paul's thought was likewise to be found in Christology. Paul's main theme was God's saving action in Christ Jesus and how a believer could participate in it.<sup>14</sup> This

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<sup>8</sup> Wrede, *Paulus*, p.53.

<sup>9</sup> Schweitzer, *Mystik*, p.220.

<sup>10</sup> Schweitzer, *Mystik*, p.209.

<sup>11</sup> Schweitzer, *Mystik*, p.210-212.

<sup>12</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.21f.

<sup>13</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.24.

<sup>14</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.447.

was Paul's centre of thought, since he had two basic convictions which governed his Christian life,

(1) that Jesus is Lord, that in him God has provided for the salvation of all who believe (in the general sense of 'be converted'), and that he will soon return to bring all things to an end; (2) that he, Paul, was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>15</sup>

The theology of Paul resulted from these convictions and in his attempt to describe this theology Sanders was coining the term 'participationist eschatology'.<sup>16</sup> Justification by faith in Romans 1-4, in this context, is not the centre of Paul's thought nor does it define faith. It is rather Paul's argument against justification by the law.<sup>17</sup> This is supported by the various meanings of righteousness in these chapters, which indicates that it does not express one single doctrine.<sup>18</sup> Since Paul is mainly interested in how one can participate in God's saving action and the concept of justification is not needed to explain this, it plays almost no role in Paul's basic convictions.

Seifrid points out that the problem with Sanders' view is that he, like Wrede, claims that Paul did not derive his convictions from his environment, so that he is again strangely detached from it.<sup>19</sup> The resulting questions and problems are the same. Why should Paul, a zealous Jew who enjoyed God's grace in the 'covenantal nomism' reject the whole system? And why did he conceive the Messiah as saviour *apart* from the Torah and even the Messiah of the Gentiles?<sup>20</sup> All Sanders states is that Paul never says why he has changed the positions in his arguments apart from his conviction that Christ is saviour of all.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, since Sanders agrees with Schweitzer that justification cannot be central because it appears only in polemical contexts, the same argument against Schweitzer's position applies to him. Justification is not shown to be unimportant by this argument.

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<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.441f.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.549.

<sup>17</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.490f.

<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.491f.

<sup>19</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.49f.; cf. Sanders, *Law*, p.208.

<sup>20</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.50.

<sup>21</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.50; cf. Sanders, *Law*, p.46f.



These scholars who have taken the position that justification is not central to Paul's thought but the *Sein in Christo*, the participation in God's saving action in Christ, and the *Lehre von Christus und seinem Werk*, all consider Christology to be the centre. Yet, all of them have problems establishing their view. It is not satisfactorily shown why justification is not supposed to be important and the source for Paul's change of thought is not explained properly either.

### ***'Justification' as Paul's suggested Centre of Thought***

In opposition to the above views, other scholars have maintained that justification by faith rather than Christology is Paul's centre of thought.

Rudolf Bultmann in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* has taken as a basic premise for Paul that the one who is without πίστις is dead and the one under πίστις receives life. Faith is central to Bultmann and all of Paul's theological expressions involve this concept of faith by showing that if someone submits himself to God, he will win himself.<sup>22</sup> Paul's view is a view of faith, so that Judaism and the life of faith is described from this position.<sup>23</sup> Bultmann's view of Paul's statements concerning the Jews and the law is that the Jews tried to secure their justification by their obedience of the law.<sup>24</sup> It is not that Bultmann states that the Jews tried to be justified by their obedience to the law,<sup>25</sup> but the notion that deeds of the law and God's mercy together were thought to secure salvation.<sup>26</sup> This has been shown by Sanders not to be the case.<sup>27</sup> However, to claim, as Sanders does, that all Judaism in Paul's time considered God to be merciful and that none of them tried to secure salvation by their deeds, would be a generalisation like Bultmann's that misses the point. Merely the fact that rabbinic literature was conscious of the problem shows that the attitude described by Bultmann was present among Jews.<sup>28</sup> On the basis of our findings, it seems, therefore, reasonable to argue that Paul was not arguing against Jewish legalism. He was rather reasoning against the notion that the 'works of

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<sup>22</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.271.

<sup>23</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.192.

<sup>24</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.261.

<sup>25</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.264.

<sup>26</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.122f.

<sup>27</sup> Sanders, *Paul*, p.117-125.

<sup>28</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.34, Footnote 106.

the law' or the law itself carries any soteriological efficacy by arguing for his concept of justification by faith and its universal timeless character.

In respect to Christology Bultmann claims that among the Christological aspects only the death and resurrection of Christ are important, which make up the *Heilsgeschehen*.<sup>29</sup> With the different descriptions of God's deed of mercy in the *Heilsgeschehen*, Paul intends to express the radical power that changes the human situation.<sup>30</sup> However, these descriptions and Christology in general are not the central thought of Paul, but subordinate to his concept of justification by faith, for it points to the concept of πίστις that if someone submits himself to God, he will win himself.

Another scholar, Ernst Käsemann, basically agrees with this description of Paul's thought. He like Georg Eicholz claims that the "Rechtfertigungslehre ist die spezifisch paulinische Deutung der Christologie wie umgekehrt diese die Grundlage der ersten."<sup>31</sup> He agrees with Wrede that justification is his *Kampfeslehre*,<sup>32</sup> but it is not unimportant to his soteriology but central. Its relevance is not restricted to Paul's time, for its message is still relevant and applicable for today.<sup>33</sup>

Paul uses the term 'righteousness of God' in different ways, but these different usages can be unified by understanding that the gift of righteousness includes the giver, Christ, himself. It is, therefore, that "der Gottessohn sei als unser Kyrios die eine eschatologische Gabe Gottes an uns und darin offenbare sich zugleich Gottes Recht auf uns wie unser Heil."<sup>34</sup> This understanding of 'God's righteousness' as 'God's saving power', is said to find its source in apocalyptic Judaism. Paul after his conversion added to the technical term its Christocentricity that included formerly

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<sup>29</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.293.

<sup>30</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, p.294.

<sup>31</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.21; cf. Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.130ff.; Eichholz, *Theologie*, p.38f.

<sup>32</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.125; cf. Käsemann, *Römer*, p.24.

<sup>33</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.126f., Wrede's view fails also since he tries to put emphasis on the *Heilsgeschichte*, which is supposed to replace the individual notion of justification. But Käsemann rejects that the concept of justification is primarily orientated on the individual and that it has to or can be replaced by the *Heilsgeschichte*.

<sup>34</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.26.

only the idea of power and gift characteristic.<sup>35</sup> However, there are only a few texts that support Käsemann's usage and his view has consequently been challenged.

Sanders has tried to use Schweitzer's arguments to show why justification cannot be the centre. Schweitzer argued that in Galatians, where the doctrine of justification by faith is stated in its simplest and most original form, it is worked out from the eschatological concept of being-in-Christ. Furthermore, justification is only used in apologetic contexts and certain other blessings are not connected to it.<sup>36</sup> However, it is questionable why Galatians, which was written with an apologetic intention, is supposed to be the clearest and simplest place where the doctrine of justification is stated. Romans, not being written in an apologetic setting, should reflect the concept of justification in an even clearer form. Galatians is specifically focused on the problem in Galatia, but Romans 1-4 is held so general in tone that Jervell tried to establish that it is a letter primarily to Jerusalem<sup>37</sup> and others that it is addressed to all Christian churches.<sup>38</sup> Romans seems, therefore, to express the concept of justification in the clearest sense, not Galatians. Their second argument that it is only used in apologetic contexts has been shown to fail above, so that Schweitzer's critique is unable to disprove Käsemann's view.

Mark Seifrid in *Justification by Faith* proposed farther critiques of Käsemann's view. Käsemann's attempt to unite varying usage of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is criticised, since "the accidental nature of language requires no necessary conceptual unity between the various usages of terms or expressions."<sup>39</sup> However, it might be true that language does not 'require' a unity of terms, but that does not mean that there is not a unity that can be detected. In response to this Seifrid argues that it is hard to detect technical terms, for it might be that a non-technical term is used alongside. Furthermore, it is questionable if the technical sense of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ can be drawn from the texts of apocalyptic Judaism to which Käsemann refers.<sup>40</sup> A discussion of these questions would certainly go beyond the scope of this thesis, but

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<sup>35</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, p.25-27.

<sup>36</sup> Schweitzer, *Mystik*, p.220f.; cf. Sanders, *Paul*, p.438f.

<sup>37</sup> Jervell, *Letter*, p.61-74.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Donfried, *Presuppositions*, p.147.

<sup>39</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.42.

<sup>40</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.42f.

we note that none of these arguments can totally disprove Käsemann's view but only question its accuracy. His position might, therefore, still be correct.

Another argument brought forth by Seifrid is that the recipients were not familiar with the background of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as Käsemann suggests, for otherwise the arguments of Romans 6 were superfluous.<sup>41</sup> However, the background of the Roman congregation suggests that they could have been aware of a Jewish apocalyptic view of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, since it is most likely that Jews founded the church in Rome and at least some Jews were still part of it when Paul wrote the letter. In support of his argument Seifrid claims that the suggestion of Romans 6 that the gift of δικαιοσύνη could encourage licentious behaviour would be unthinkable for someone who knows that δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ means 'God's saving and obedience-producing power'. This line of thought has certainly no argumentative weight, for those addressed by Galatians were also aware that deeds of the law have no soteriological efficacy and yet Paul had to correct them in this matter. Knowledge of a truth does not protect from behaviour contrary to the known truth.

We conclude that the view taking justification by faith as being the centre of Paul's thought offers a solution that has as yet not been shown to be wrong. Schweitzer's critique is not convincing and the arguments brought forth by Seifrid take away some of the strength of Käsemann's view, but are not able to disprove it. It remains for us to discuss other proposed solutions before we can come to a final conclusion in this matter.

### *Other suggested Solutions*

We have noted earlier Beker's critique of the above views that they destroy the variety of thought in the Pauline letters. Stowers is indirectly agreeing to this critique by stating that no conceptual unity of language is required for the various usages of terms. By Käsemann's and others unification of the terms the variety of thought is lost. To avoid this Beker places the centre of Paul's thought in the 'apocalyptic structure of language'. Paul's range of symbols, including justification, interpret the Gospel according to the needs of a particular situation. These symbols constitute Paul's symbolic structure, which primarily signifies the Christ-event in its meaning

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<sup>41</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.44f.

and only secondarily Paul's interpretation of his Christian apocalyptic in particular situations.<sup>42</sup> He, therefore, does not seek to find the centre of Paul's thought in one of the 'symbols', but in a 'coherent centre' behind these 'symbols'. He rejects the idea of a doctrinal system of Paul expressed in his letters and likewise that Romans contains a dogmatic 'essence'.<sup>43</sup> The major problem of his view is that he argues for a 'coherent centre' consisting of the various symbols. Paul is said to express his fundamental convictions with these symbols in specific situations, but this would mean that he has a doctrinal system and essence on which his symbols are based. These fundamental convictions must come to expression in Paul's thought at the one or other point, so that a detection of them (in Romans or in the 'symbols' in general) is possible. His letters thus do contain his doctrinal system and it is not obvious why one single 'symbol' (e.g. justification) should not express the essence of his thought.

Seifrid and Markus Barth have claimed that justification is not the centre of Paul's thought, but only *a* central Pauline theme.<sup>44</sup> For both justification is an important concept that Paul has derived from the Christ event. Whereby Barth and Seifrid try to find a position between the two views that Christology or justification is the centre of Paul's thought, Seifrid seems to tend towards justification being the centre. He states that it "is appropriate, however, to search for a single metaphor by which this soteriological 'part' may be related to the apocalyptic 'whole'".<sup>45</sup> The 'soteriological part' is not all of Paul's thought, so that terms like fundamental, essential, or basic would wrongly indicate that all the other themes are logically built upon or connected to justification by faith. For Seifrid, therefore, the concept of justification by faith is the centre of Paul's thought in respect to the soteriological expressions or metaphors used. That he does not regard justification to be the centre of the whole of Paul's thought is heavily dependent on his arguments against Käsemann's view. However, we have argued above that Käsemann's position is not necessarily proven to be wrong by his arguments. It remains thus to be shown that Stowers' arguments are decisive for his position to show that justification is not *the* central Pauline thought.

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<sup>42</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.16.

<sup>43</sup> Beker, *Paul*, p.62f.

<sup>44</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.255-270; Barth, *Rechtfertigung*, p.141f.

<sup>45</sup> Seifrid, *Justification*, p.270.

In our attempt to give a brief overview of important views about the centrality of the concept of justification by faith and the inherited problems, it has become obvious that we will not be able to deal with this subject as one ought in order to come to a proper solution. However, some arguments have already shown that certain views have problems that make them unlikely. Wrede's claim that justification is *only* Paul's *Kampfeslehre* being unimportant to his primary soteriology, certainly misses the universal applicability of Paul's argument that goes beyond a historical situation. In general, those views that have attempted to establish Christology as the centre and justification as an unimportant argument, have severe problems establishing their views and are not able to argue effectively against justification as the centre of Paul's thought. In the end, Käsemann's position that justification by faith is the central theme of Paul's thought seems to be the best explanation. However, Seifrid's critique needs to be acknowledged and the possibility that justification is only *a* central Pauline theme will need some further studies on Paul's thought, which would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

### ***Additional Remarks***

The centrality of justification and its importance for Paul find support from our findings in our discussion of Romans 1-4 and Abraham. Paul is establishing there that all, Jew and Gentile, can be justified by faith before and after the Christ event even without knowledge of the Christ event and that God thus proves himself righteous. Taking Romans as a whole it makes sense that these general and important theological convictions stated in Romans 1-4 should make up the basis of Paul's argument on which he builds the rest of the letter.<sup>46</sup> Ethics are, therefore, not disconnected to the concept of justification by faith, but the logical consequence of it.

Christology is not the centre of Paul's thought in Romans 1-4, but only the means for and the basis of the concept of justification.<sup>47</sup> The theocentricity and emphasis on the functional rather than relational aspects of the Christ event are present throughout Romans, so that an argument claiming that Christology is the centre of Paul thought in Romans would flout the evidence. This can of course not be

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<sup>46</sup> See 'The traditional View & Sanders' Adherence' p.28-30 above.

<sup>47</sup> See 'Πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' p.72-83 above.

claimed to such an extent for Galatians, but here we enter the discussion of whether Paul's argument in Romans 1-4 is an occasional position, which we will discuss next.

Romans 1-4 confirms thus the central character of Paul's concept of justification by faith. We conclude that the concept is, therefore, central to Paul's thought in Romans, whereby Christology itself is not at focus, but only the functional aspects that provide the basis for the justification by faith. Justification and consequently our findings has influence on other Pauline subjects. Two things must be noted in respect to this. Firstly, it cannot be established on the basis of Romans 1-4 whether justification by faith is *the* centre or only *a* centre of Paul's thought. Only a complete discussion of Paul's thought is able to discern to what extent it is central. Our brief overview has pointed to the conclusion that it is the central theme, but such an overview is certainly not able to discuss the issues raised fully. Criticisms like Seifrid's will have to be discussed more thoroughly at another place. Secondly, before one can assume that justification by faith is central and our findings thus influence other and especially soteriological concepts of Paul, it has to be shown that it was not a temporal concept applicable only to his discussion of the Jewish-Gentile relationship. This we will discuss further in the following section.

### **Romans 1-4, an occasional Position?**

We have discussed the occasion of Romans, coming to the conclusion that Paul had three purposes in writing that we are aware of. These were to seek support for his visit to Jerusalem, problems in Rome similar to the conflict Paul was facing in his upcoming visit to Jerusalem over the observance of the Torah, and his missionary enterprise to Spain.<sup>48</sup> For the first two purposes Paul's concept of justification by faith was of similar relevance, because for the Roman congregation and in Jerusalem the issue of discussion was the role of the Torah and the Jewish-Gentile relationship. Wrede argued that since it is only used for this specific situation, it has no relevance for Paul's overall soteriology and thus none for us today.<sup>49</sup> This thought might be stated in the general form asking if Paul's thought arises from his attempts to respond to specific situations. From our observances so far, this question would certainly have to be answered with a 'yes'. It is, therefore, appropriate to ask whether Wrede was

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<sup>48</sup> See 'The historical Context' p.21-26 above.

not correct in assuming that this discussion was only relevant for that specific situation.

Stendahl argued contrary to Wrede, Käsemann and others that justification is not a *Kampfeslehre* directed against Judaism but an apologetic to argue for the full membership of the Gentiles in the people of God apart from the law.<sup>50</sup> For Stendahl Romans thus has much to do with Jew-Gentile relations, but is not concerned with or attempts to establish an argument to discuss the personal soteriology of mankind.<sup>51</sup> His position that Paul argues for the inclusion of the Gentiles has sufficiently been dealt with in our discussion above by showing that Paul is not arguing primarily for the inclusion of the Gentiles, but that all humanity was meant to be justified at all times by faith and God's righteousness. His rejection of the term *Kampfeslehre* has been shown to be correct by Sanders' findings that the Jews were not legalistic, so that Paul was not arguing primarily against Jewish legalism. However, his position does not otherwise contradict Wrede's for both claim that personal soteriology is excluded from the concept of justification.

The true opposite position to Wrede and the like is the one that understands Romans more as a theological treatise than a personal letter, establishing with it Paul's Gospel.<sup>52</sup> Karl Paul Donfried in *The Romans Debate* has been discussing the presuppositions that lead to certain conclusions like the one that Romans is a theological treatise.<sup>53</sup> The diatribe style is said to indicate that Romans is not dealing with a concrete historical situation.<sup>54</sup> Donfried has succeeded together with others in showing that the diatribe style does not indicate the detachment from the historical situation of Rome,<sup>55</sup> so that contemporary scholarship primarily sees Romans in its setting of the above mentioned situation. From this one might want to infer that Wrede's view of a temporal relevance of the concept of justification is correct.

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<sup>49</sup> Wrede, *Paulus*, p.72.

<sup>50</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.129-132.

<sup>51</sup> Stendahl, *Paul*, p.1-7.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Dodd, *Romans*, p.xxv; Nygren, *Römerbrief*, p.12ff.; Michel, *Römer*, p.20; Wilckens, *Römer*, p.47-48.

<sup>53</sup> Donfried, *Presuppositions*, p.127ff.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Donfried, *Presuppositions*, p.132.

<sup>55</sup> Donfried, *Presuppositions*, p.132ff.



Wrede's view is even supported by the differences we have observed between Romans 4 and Galatians 3. Paul is obviously changing some aspects in his description of justification. The most important changes are that in Galatians Christ is the 'seed' while in Romans all believers are the seed. Secondly, the faith-language, is in Galatians only 'faith in Christ'-language and according to our above argumentation in Romans solely 'faith in God'-language.<sup>56</sup> If Paul were not applying the concept of justification by faith to certain situations, this change from Christocentric to theocentric language would need to find its explanation either in a development in Paul's theology between the writing of the two letters, in an attempt to unify these differences, or by finding an explanation in the historical setting that accounts for these differences.<sup>57</sup> A unification of Paul's thought seems to be a very difficult if not impossible task. To find the explanation in a development of Paul's thought, on the other hand, might not be possible in all cases, but possibly here. However, the shortness of time between the writings seems rather to point to the latter suggestion that the occasion accounts for the changes in Paul's concept of justification. But the exact reasons for Paul's theocentric language in Romans and the other changes are not clear.

In response to these arguments for the occasional character of the concept of justification by faith, it has to be said that it is unlikely that Paul was only using justification for the specific purpose of discussing the relation of Jew and Gentile and the observance of the Torah even though it appears mainly in this context. Paul is radically reinterpreting history in Romans 1-4 and specifically the Jewish history by using the example of Abraham. He argues for a salvation historical continuity that goes beyond individual soteriological aspects as Käsemann rightly notes.<sup>58</sup> 'Faith in God' is established as the all deciding factor for one's justification throughout history, but God's righteousness is established as well through the Christ event and constitutes the basis on which 'faith' can become soteriologically relevant. It is, therefore, highly unlikely as Stendahl claims that Paul could argue for the inclusion of the Gentiles using forensic terms in relation to God without having personal

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<sup>56</sup> See 'Romans 4 and Galatians 3' p.84-85 above.

<sup>57</sup> See 'Theocentricity and 'Faith in God'-Language' p.90-91 above for some possible explanations; cf. Jervell, *Letter*, p.69f.

<sup>58</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.117ff.

soteriological aspects in mind. The establishment of God's righteousness through the Christ event in the concept of justification by faith does focus primarily on God, but also on the individual justification of humankind.<sup>59</sup> Rather than using a concept being relevant only for the Jewish-Gentile situation, Paul seems to apply a concept to a specific situation that explains the relevance of faith throughout history for all humankind. This explanation of the salvation-history fits well the situation of Galatia and Rome, since it can express properly the place of the Jews and Gentiles in history. Justification by faith is, therefore, for Paul not an occasional position that lost its relevance, but his interpretation of the Christ event, his view of the salvation-history, that is applied to the specific situation in Rome and Galatia. We, therefore, do not deny the occasional character of Romans, but we do deny the notion that all of it is only relevant for the situation in Rome. Paul is clearly applying his concept of justification by faith to a specific situation, but the concept itself is not bound to that situation only, but offers Paul's explanation of the Gospel and its scope of efficacy.

### SUGGESTED AREAS OF APPLICATION

The paradigmatic function of Abraham's faith has led us to the conclusion that Paul's concept of justification by faith is not limited to a historical situation. Paul seems rather to offer his perspective of God's activity in history through the Christ event, his view of salvation-history. He is certainly doing so in a specific historical situation to explain his position and to deal possibly with the problems in the Roman congregation. Nevertheless, he is using a concept that explains further God's Gospel, being thus not restricted to the historical situation only. This basic premise allows us to suggest very briefly some areas of application.

Paul is describing Abraham and his faith in terms that make him the 'father' of all who have faith before and after Christ with or without knowledge of the Christ event. If such a view is adopted for those having faith today, the idea of Missions will need some rethinking. Whatever the outcome of such rethinking might be, as we have noted earlier, the importance of the Christ event is not reduced. In our pluralistic world with its current emphasis on dialogue this view might, therefore, be able to provide a new ground for cross-cultural communication.

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<sup>59</sup> Käsemann, *Perspektiven*, p.138.

Another area of application might result from following Sanders' findings that the Jews prior to Christ were not legalistic (at least not all). Paul's argument that even the Gentiles were able to be justified before the Christ event like the Jews has taken any ground for boasting in the possession of the law on the Jewish side. However, the Gentiles likewise can no longer claim that the Jews have somehow missed their task, for the Gentiles like Abraham were able to be justified apart from the Jewish people. Current Jewish-Gentile dialogue might thus gain from this view an explanation that could offer new ideas for a better understanding of history before and after the Christ event.

In respect to the 'works of the law' it would be inappropriate to simply assume that works in general for anyone are soteriologically meaningless, since Paul explicitly refers to those works required by the law. However, Paul has argued that all are aware of the proper standard of the law, even Abraham. Such a general awareness of the proper standard of the law goes beyond an argument that reproaches the Jews legalism. An application of Paul's concept of justification by faith apart from the law is, therefore, not impossible. 'Works of the law' being the misuse of the proper knowledge of the standard of the law to secure or maintain justification is not a phenomena of the past. Paul with the example of Abraham shows that such deeds carry no soteriological efficacy. Only those who follow Abraham's example of faith will be able to fulfil the law as it was meant to be fulfilled.

These suggested applications of our findings concerning the character of Abraham's faith can only hint to the directions further studies may take and what effects they may carry on the various areas. They can only highlight the importance of Paul's use of Abraham as an example. Abraham and the character of his faith has been crucial for Paul to argue his case that even the Gentiles can be justified by faith and that God has proven himself to be righteous, and his example is likewise today crucial in our dialogue with non-Christian peoples and the Jews and in its function as the example of faith for all Christians.

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